



# STORIES FROM SHAKESPEARE



# STORIES FROM SHAKESPEARE

RETOLD BY  
THOMAS CARTER

AUTHOR OF  
"SHAKESPEARE'S STORIES OF THE ENGLISH KINGS"  
ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
GERTRUDE DEMAIN HAMMOND R.I.

*O eyes sublime,  
With tears and laughters for all time!*  
MRS BROWNING



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DEDICATED WITH ALL REGARDS  
TO MY FRIEND  
H. M.

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# The Merchant of Venice

*"To-day we bring old gather'd herbs 'tis true,  
But such as in sweet Shakespeare's garden grew."*

CROWNE: Prologue to *Henry VI.*, Part I.

**I**N the spacious days when Venice was the market of the world, and ships of every nation were to be seen upon the Adriatic, there dwelt at Belmont a lady whose genius, wealth, and beauty made her the desire of every heart. The four winds wafted renowned suitors from every coast, and Princes from Morocco and Arragon, and lords and gentlemen from France, Germany, England, and Scotland, sought to gain her hand in marriage. To win the lady and her fortune they had to trust to Fortune, for her father, a very wise and scholarly nobleman, by a good inspiration which holy men have sometimes at their death, had devised a plan whereby his daughter's hand would be won by a man whose insight had been quickened by true love.

He had prepared three caskets, and those who came to woo the lady had to discover the casket chosen by him. The first was of pure gold, beautifully chased and ornamented; it had upon it this inscription: "Who chooseth

me shall gain what many men desire," but the outside alone was fair, for within there was a grinning skull, whose empty eye-socket had been filled with a scroll which bore these mocking words :

*— " All that glisters is not gold ;  
Often have you heard that told :  
Many a man his life hath sold,  
But my outside to behold :  
Gilded tombs do worms infold.  
Had you been as wise as bold,  
Young in limbs, in judgment old,  
Your answer had not been inscroll'd :  
Fare you well ; your suit is cold."*

The second casket was equally fair, but of silver. It had upon it " Who chooseth me shall have as much as he deserves," and contained the picture of an idiot holding a schedule in his hand with these words written upon it :

*" The fire seven times tried this :  
Seven times tried that judgment is  
That did never choose amiss.  
Some there be that shadows kiss ;  
Such have but a shadow's bliss.  
There be fools alive, I wis,  
Silver'd o'er ; and so was this."*

The third casket was of lead, dull, heavy-looking, and meagre. It bore no inscription and looked very uninviting, but nevertheless it contained the treasure, for within there was a beautifully finished picture of the lady, and these lines :

*“ You that choose not by the view,  
Chance as fair, and choose as true !  
Since this fortune falls to you,  
Be content, and seek no new.  
If you be well pleased with this,  
And hold your fortune for your bliss,  
Turn you where your lady is,  
And claim her with a loving kiss.”*

The portrait of Portia was worthy to be enshrined in the costliest and most beautiful of caskets, for the lady had a mind and heart of richest worth, and an outward form which seemed to centre in itself all the graces of Italy. She was fair, and her sunny locks hung on her temples like a golden fleece, but she was even fairer in the beauty of her mind, which was of wondrous virtue. She had been taught by the best of masters, and loved to have around her beautiful pictures, costly marbles, and precious things. Her palace was in the midst of magnificent gardens, where fountains played and the most rare flowers bloomed, and she had grown to womanhood under every influence calculated to bring out all that was best in a noble, sunny nature. She was brave and ready, quick-witted and clever, able to devise a plan and capable of carrying it to success, and withal she was gentle and modest. She said to the one who won her love, that she wished she could be trebled twenty times in excellence for his sake, and become a thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more rich; and that she was but an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised, happy that she was not too dull nor too old to learn, but happiest of all that her gentle spirit could commit itself to the

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directing care of a great love. There is no flaw in the beauty of her character, and although it was a man's hand that drew her picture for us, yet she is in all things a true and perfect woman, an ideal of womanly grace and dignity.

The sorrows and hard disciplines of life had scarcely brushed her with their wings. Some natures are developed under cold winds and cloudy skies, but she had grown beneath the sunshine. Any sorrow she had known, as the death of mother and father, had been like the incoming of the cool night air, which gives the bloom of beauty to the tender grape. Within the fair palace which looked from its gardens upon the sunlit waters of the Adriatic the Lady Portia lived her happy days, far removed from that anxious, sorrowing, striving crowd which thronged the busy market-places of Venice.

But in that city, as far from her as though he dwelt in another planet, there was a man who was destined to stand before Portia in the supreme crisis of his life. He was a man advanced in years, of a proscribed and hated race; born an outcast, cradled in contempt, developed under adverse skies and bitter winds. Sufferance was the badge of all his tribe, and in the streets of a city which prided itself upon its freedom he could be spat upon, and buffeted, and spurned like an ill-bred cur. Whole centuries of insult and wrong had been inflicted upon his ancient race, and the iron had entered the soul of this proud, strong, capable man. Grown to manhood in an atmosphere of cruel hostility and wrong, he had learned to hate with a cold and relentless intensity. The poorest and most unbefriended man often finds in his own home that which is denied

him in the streets, and amid the tender relationships and happy communion of the fireside the world-hardened and sorely buffeted striver can lay aside his weapons and his armour and forget his insults and his cares.

But even here an adverse fate had pursued Shylock, for Death had early taken away his wife Leah; and his daughter Jessica, too careless and too selfish to strive to learn the secret of a proud man's heart, had allowed his home to grow into a place of suspicion and coldness and bickering, wherein the strife of the world outside was carried within its walls, and dishonesty and treachery allowed to make havoc of its peace. Shylock was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, embittered and hardened by the memory of an oppression which had been grievous for centuries; but Jessica was a traitor to his blood, ready at the first bidding to lay the honour of her people and of her house at the feet of their enemies. Under such circumstances a nature inclined to harshness and cruelty deteriorates rapidly, and Shylock became a slave to two overmastering passions, avarice and revenge. The art of money-making was the only activity open to him, and he brought to it a heart hardened by contumely and an intelligence sharpened by all the shifts and devices of a persecuted people. Oppression corroded his heart like fetters corrode the flesh, and it sharpened alike the knife of his cruelty and the rapier of his wit. He became hard, icy, and cruel, with an unbending will, a tenacious purpose, and a biting sarcasm. Nothing could terrify him and nothing could turn him from his purpose; remonstrance could not soften, ridicule could not move, obloquy could not exasperate him. He

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grew almost superhuman in his bitter hate, until in the fiercest moments of his passion he became a very monster of malignity. With his usury he gathered wealth about him, and as his power increased he began to find opportunities to feed fat the ancient grudge he bore against the Gentile oppressors of his race.

Against one well-known merchant, Antonio by name, he cherished a bitter animosity. Antonio was a wealthy shipowner, whose vessels were on many seas, and he had more than once crossed the path of Shylock, and on each occasion the Jew had been made to feel the lash of bitter scorn. Not only had Antonio lent out money without interest, and so brought down the rate of usance in Venice, but he had also singled out Shylock as the mark of his contempt. On the Rialto he railed upon his nation, ridiculed his thrift and spoiled his bargains, and even went the length of coarsest insult, calling him a misbeliever and a cut-throat dog and spitting upon his Jewish gaberdine. All this Shylock had borne with assumed patience, for sufferance was natural to the Jew, but the insults rankled in his mind and he waited quietly for his revenge.

At length the occasion offered and the proud and wealthy Antonio became suitor for a loan. Not because of his own personal needs, but in order that he might lend three thousand ducats to a kinsman named Bassanio, who was his dearest and most intimate friend.

Bassanio was a soldier of rank but of little estate. Like Falstaff, his means were slender and his waste great, or at least his wants were greater than his income, and he found that his only prospects lay in marriage with a rich heiress. His eyes were turned towards the

fair lady and the great estate of Belmont, and from what he had seen of Portia he concluded that he had found some favour in the lady's eyes.

But in order to compete with Princes a lover must be furnished well, and to achieve this end Bassanio turned to his obliging friend Antonio. At the outset he confessed that he had disabled his estate by showing a more swelling port than his faint means could grant continuance, and said that his great debts were troubling his mind and hampering his advance. He knew that Antonio was his greatest creditor, but he now had a plan which would establish his position firmly. With ready ingenuity he began by reminding the merchant of their boyhood, and said that in his schooldays when, in his archery practice, he had lost one shaft he used to shoot another arrow in the selfsame direction, watching closely where it fell, and thus by adventuring both he often found both. So, he went on to say :

*"That which I owe is lost ;  
But if you please to shoot another arrow that self way  
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,  
As I will watch the aim, or to find both,  
Or bring your latter hazard back again,  
And thankfully rest debtor for the first."*

But Antonio had not another arrow to adventure, for all his fortunes were at sea and he had neither money nor commodity to raise a present sum. The only way out of the difficulty would be to find a wealthy money-lender who would lend the sum upon the security of the ships which were at sea. Shylock was appealed to. He was quick to seize the opportunity placed within his grasp, although he concealed his eagerness

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under the guise of caution. Three thousand ducats for three months, and Antonio bound by bond opened the way to an ingenious and cruel revenge. The Jew refused to take any security for his money on ships at sea, for, as he wisely said, ships are but boards, sailors but men; there be land-rats and water-rats—he meant pirates, water-thieves, and land-thieves—and there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks. Thus although Antonio had an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies, a third to Mexico, and a fourth in the English Channel, yet his means were only in supposition, and Shylock wanted a stable security. “Fast bind, fast find,” was a proverb never stale to a thrifty mind, and this was the Jew’s favourite proverb.

When Bassanio joined Antonio, Shylock began to show some of the malice of his heart. With his subtle wit and clever tongue he touched Antonio on the quick and showed him that he had not forgotten the careless insolence of the merchant:

“ Well then, it now appears you need my help :  
 Go to, then ; you come to me, and you say,  
 ‘ Shylock, we would have moneys ’ ; you say so ;  
 You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,  
 And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur  
 Over your threshold : moneys is your suit.  
 What should I say to you ? Should I not scy,  
 ‘ Hath a dog money ? is it possible  
 A cur can lend three thousand ducats ? ’ or  
 Shall I bend low, and in a bondman’s key,  
 With bated breath, and whispering humbleness,  
 Say this,—  
 ‘ Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last ;

*You spurn'd me such a day ; another time  
You call'd me dog ; and for these courtesies  
I'll lend you thus much moneys ? ' ' "*

With these words the anger of Antonio was roused, and he was drawn nearer the pit the wily Jew was digging. He said in rather lofty tones that he had not come to Shylock as a friend, but rather as one who repented not a single insult that he had heaped upon him, and would be like to repeat the insults if it suited him and the occasion warranted. "Lend me the money as thine enemy, and if I break, you may with better face exact the penalty."

Shylock then unfolded the plot that was in his mind, for Antonio was ready. It was only a merry bond on very fair terms and a kind of jest, but the Jew would lend his money on no other. He would demand no interest, but he stipulated that a bond should be formally sealed at a notary's to the effect that if the merchant Antonio failed to pay the sum of three thousand ducats on that day three months hence the forfeit should be

| "*An equal pound  
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken  
In what part of your body pleaseth me.*"

It was a strange but merry jest, for a pound of man's flesh taken from a man is not so estimable nor so profitable as flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats, and therefore it was not likely to profit Shylock much. It was offering the security of Antonio's person against the loss of the loan, and this seemed fair in the absence of other guarantees. Yet with a cruel heart behind it, it might be *made* a deadly matter for Antonio. But the bond was *sealed*

and Bassanio received the money. He bought presents, furnished his servants with rich liveries, and gave a farewell supper to his friends before he set sail for Belmont, where he was to put his fortune to the touch.

Shylock so far had succeeded in the opening of his plot, but his enemies were not so simple as he deemed them, and a scheme was ripening against himself which, if successful, would bring sorrow and loss to his house. To the supper of Bassanio the Jew was invited. A former servant, Launcelot Gobbo, a simple-minded clown, was the bearer of the invitation, and although Shylock had always despised his dull stupidity, he made an effective instrument in the hands of more skilful plotters. The invitation was a courtesy which was used as a cover for an act of treachery on the part of Jessica and Lorenzo, her lover, who had made their preparations for an elopement when Shylock was away from home.

Launcelot played with the Jew as cleverly as Shylock had beguiled Antonio. Though there was little sympathy between Shylock and his daughter, yet he had full confidence in her, and gave her his keys and bid her guard the house. He was right loath to go, for he felt that some ill was brewing against him, having dreamed of money-bags. As he hesitated Launcelot made use of his indecision.

"I beseech you, sir, go : they have conspired together. I will not say you shall see a masque ; but if you do, then it was not for nothing that my nose fell a-bleeding on Black Monday last at six o'clock in the morning, falling out that year on Ash Wednesday was four year, in the afternoon." Thus hinting danger in one breath and urging in another, the clown played his part.

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II

*"By Jacob's staff, I swear,  
I have no mind of feasting forth to-night;  
But I will go,"*

said Shylock, and at that moment Launcelot whispered in the daughter's ear:

*"Mistress, look out at window, for all this;  
There will come a Christian by,  
Will be worth a Jewess' eye."*

This was the answer to a letter sent by Jessica to Lorenzo, and then she knew that all was prepared for her flight from home.

Shylock had the satisfaction of laughing at Bassanio and Antonio, but meanwhile his own house was being despoiled, and that which lay nearest his own heart was being torn away by his treacherous and unworthy daughter. At a late hour, when he returned from the supper, he found his house empty and his daughter gone; and, worst of all, two sealed bags of ducats and two magnificent diamonds and other jewels had been stolen. With a wild outcry he raised the alarm, and in the early morning the people saw him dashing towards the palace of the Duke.

As he went he tore his garments and cried: "My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter! Fled with a Christian! Justice! the law! my ducats and my daughter!" He called upon the Duke to search the ship of Bassanio, and soldiers were sent, but it was found that Bassanio had already sailed for Belmont. Then some one said that Lorenzo and Jessica had been seen together in a gondola. Antonio was brought forward, and he swore that the fugitives were not with

Bassanio. But Shylock had already fixed upon Antonio as the contriver of the plot, and he went back to his darkened home with his hate against the merchant intensified a thousandfold. Even the street-boys mocked him as he hurried through the byways of the city, and all around him there arose jeering cries: "O my daughter! O my ducats! Justice! my daughter and my ducats!"

Meanwhile the sun was shining upon Bassanio and his friend Gratiano, as they sped over the waters to Belmont. The departure of a brilliant retinue from the palace gave indication that the Princes of Morocco and Arragon had failed with the caskets, and the reception given to Bassanio seemed to be full of the happiest augury. Indeed, it was soon manifest that the Venetian soldier had won the lady's heart.

Portia would not allow him to hasten his choice of the caskets, lest he should fail and be compelled to cut his visit short. She said that she would like to detain him for a month or two before he ventured, and that she could teach him how to choose aright but for her oath, and yet if he missed the right casket she could wish that she had been forsworn. With many pretty words she strove to veil the love that gladdened her heart; but the light could not be hidden, and at length she spoke without concealment:

*"Beshrew your eyes,  
They have overlooked me, and divided me:  
One half of me is yours, the other half yours,—  
Mine own, I would say; but if mine, then  
yours,  
And so all yours!"*

Upon this hint Bassanio begged to make his choice at once :

“ *Let me choose ;*

*For, as I am, I live upon the rack.*”

“ *Upon the rack, Bassanio ? then confess*

*What treason there is mingled with your love.*”

“ *None,*” replied Bassanio, “ *but that ugly treason of mistrust,*

*Which makes me fear the enjoying of my love.*”

He felt that there was now no need to hide the love that was in his own heart, for he had been assured of Portia's love for him, but he dreaded any mischance. If he chose the wrong casket he would forfeit far more than the wealth of Belmont ; he would lose the treasure of a noble woman's heart. Portia was bound by an oath, but when was oath or bond too strait for woman's wit when woman's love was in the question ? It is possible to keep a promise in the letter and break it in the spirit. Some bonds are best treated thus, for broken hearts are more sad than a broken bond. Love reasoned in this way, and Bassanio drew his bow at a venture and watched the arrow's flight.

“ *Promise me life,*” he said, “ *and I'll confess the truth.*”

“ *Well then, confess, and live,*” was Portia's reply,

and Bassanio knew then that he had no need to dread the result of his choice—

“ *O happy torment, when my torturer*

*Doth teach me answers for deliverance !*

*But let me to my fortune and the caskets.*”

The next sentence showed him where the secret lay.

## Stories from Shakespeare

*“ Away then. I am lock’d in one of them :  
 If you do love me, you will find me out.—  
 Nerissa, and the rest, stand all aloof.—  
 Let music sound, while he doth make his choice.”*

Musicians and singers had been stationed in the audience chamber, and at the word of Portia they sang a song which bore within itself some indication to Bassanio how he ought to proceed in the difficult choice which lay before him. The father of Portia had placed within the golden casket the warning that “All that glisters is not gold,” and the unfortunate suitor who had been beguiled by the beauty of the casket received that warning only after he had lost his chance of the hand of Portia. The song which was now being sung was a warning, to one who was quick-witted enough to receive it, against being led away by outward show and golden ornament, and the fancies which these things naturally cause to arise in the mind. Portia was anxious that Bassanio should be warned before he made his choice. The words of the song were :

*“ Tell me, where is fancy bred,  
 Or in the heart, or in the head ?  
 How begot, how nourished ?  
 Reply, reply.*

*“ It is engender’d in the eyes,  
 With gazing fed ; and fancy dies  
 In the cradle where it lies.  
 Let us all ring fancy’s knell ;  
 I’ll begin it,—Ding, dong, bell.”*

Bassanio stood thoughtfully before the caskets and

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waited till the song came to an end and the strains of music sank almost into silence. He was a loving and a quick-witted suitor, and his words when he spoke revealed to Portia that he had grasped the clue proffered to him in the song.

*"So may the outward shows be least themselves :  
The world is still deceived with ornament."*

Ornament, like the richly chased gold and silver vessels, might be the beguiling shore to a most dangerous sea, a seeming truth which cunning times put on to ~~any~~ the wisest ; therefore,

*"Thou meagre lack,  
Which rather threatenest than dost promise aught,  
Thy paleness moves me more than blushing  
And here choose I. Joy be the consequence."*

And so he made his choice of the ~~lady~~ ~~and~~ won the lady, more by the gift of her own heart and her father's words than by the caprice of Fortune.

In the midst of the happiness of Bassanio and Portia and Gratiano and Nerissa, for they had ~~not~~ ~~known~~ their mutual love, a messenger from Venice came ~~springing~~ in hot haste to the palace gates. He ~~came~~ ~~to~~ for Bassanio. It was from Antonio, and ~~conveyed~~ the fatal news that the merchant was ~~ruined~~ ~~and~~ under the shadow of prison and a cruel death. Bassanio ~~was~~ with pale face and trembling hands.

"Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all ~~perished~~, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit ; and since in paying it it is impossible I should live, all debts are cleared between you and I, if I might but see you at my death."

standing, use your pleasure ; if your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter."

Bassanio had forgotten Shylock, but time had fled and the Jew had moved swiftly to his revenge. Antonio had been arrested and flung into gaol, and Shylock clamoured for judgment on the forfeit of his bond.

The storm had been gathering. Soon after the bond had been signed mysterious rumours of disaster to Antonio had been circulated in Venice. No one knew how the tidings originated, but it was common talk upon the Rialto that the merchant was ruined. It was not ascertained that the word was true, and it seems likely that Shylock knew that the reports were false, and so hurried on to his revenge, for by a strange accident a letter afterwards fell into the hands of Portia when the Jew had been disgraced and his effects seized, and this gave the news that three of Antonio's vessels, richly laden, had safely come to port.

Antonio was kept in prison and a day was appointed for the trial, when the Duke would be asked to grant that the forfeiture should hold. It was recognised that the case was an extreme one, yet the cause of law was not to be denied, and the State of Venice would be impeached if a legal bond between merchants was not upheld. Even Antonio himself voiced this general opinion, and was prepared to yield his bosom to the knife should Shylock persist in his claim.

The Duke approached the case with great reluctance, and was so perplexed by the bond that he caused his officials to consult the jurists of Italy on the points involved, and the most famous lawyer of the day, Dr. Bellino of Padua, had been invited to sit as judge with the Duke. Now this great lawyer was the cousin

of Portia, and would doubtless have visited Belmont had he come to Venice, but a sudden indisposition made him unable to accede to the Duke's request, wherefore it seemed likely that Antonio would lose any assistance that the keenest legal intellect in Italy might have given him. But Bassanio had won more than a loving wife in Portia, and no sooner had she mastered the details of this curious difficulty than she conceived a plan to befriend Antonio. A substitute shines brightly as a king until a king be by, and the Lady of Belmont determined to take the place of the Doctor of Padua.

The marriage ceremony being hurriedly celebrated, Portia bade farewell to her husband, and then sent her confidential servant, Balthazar, post-haste to Padua. "Look," she said, "what notes and garments he doth give thee, bring them, I pray thee, with imagined speed, unto the Tranect, to the common ferry which trades with Venice. Waste no time in words, but get thee gone; I shall be there before thee." Then, taking Nerissa with her in the carriage, she set off after Bassanio on the twenty miles' journey which lay between her and the man she meant to save.

On the morrow the citizens of Venice filled the court where Antonio the Merchant was to be tried. Public sympathy was with him and it was known that the Duke had tried hard to move Shylock. His words to Antonio as he took his seat were significant of failure :

*"I am sorry for thee : thou art come to answer  
A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch  
Uncapable of pity, void and empty  
From any dram of mercy ;"*

and his appeal to Shylock was met with a straight and cold refusal :

*“ I have possess’d your Grace of what I purpose,  
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn  
To have the due and forfeit of my bond.  
If you deny it, let the danger light  
Upon your charter and your city’s freedom.”*

Bassanio tried to reach the heart of Shylock by appealing to his love of gold, offering him six thousand ducats. With a smile of contempt he answered that if every ducat in six thousand ducats were in six parts and every part a ducat he would still claim the forfeit of his bond.

*“ The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,  
Is dearly bought ; ’tis mine and I will have it.  
If you deny me, fie upon your law !  
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.  
I stand for judgment : answer ; shall I have it ? ”*

His words had a ring of command in them, and the Duke saw that he was bent on forcing a decision. As a last resort the judge fell back upon the absence of Bellario, and would have dismissed the court until his recovery, but at the moment he was announcing his decision a messenger from Bellario arrived and craved a hearing. Nerissa, disguised as a clerk, entered the court and handed in a letter from Padua. Shylock waited impatiently, and then stooped down and sharpened his knife by whetting it upon his leather sole. There was a hush of expectancy as the clerk of the court read the communication from Bellario.

“ Your Grace shall understand that at the receipt

of your letter I am very sick: but on the instant that your messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a young doctor of Rome; his name is Balthazar. I acquainted him with the cause of controversy between the Jew and Antonio the Merchant: we turned o'er many books together: he is furnished with my opinion; which, bettered with his own learning—the greatness whereof I cannot enough commend—comes with him, at my importunity, to fill up your Grace's request in my stead. I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation; for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish his commendation."

Portia, in the robes of a Doctor of Laws, now entered, and the Duke having graciously signified his acceptance of her aid, she took her seat as judge beside him. Shylock fixed a steadfast gaze upon her. At last these two had met, she from the palace where wealth and beauty had made her life all sunshine, he from the home of an outcast, whose present darkness only faintly typified the sorrow and gloom of a persecuted alien. Circumstances had done much to mould their characters. The daughter of Day was facing the son of Night.

With perfect self-possession Portia began the battle with her great opponent. Antonio and Shylock were bidden to stand forth, and the merchant was asked if he confessed the bond. Upon his reply Portia endeavoured to move the heart of Shylock by an appeal to his religious feelings and to his humanity. When Antonio confessed the bond she said: "Then must the Jew be merciful."

"On what compulsion must I? Tell me that," said Shylock. The reply has since re-echoed round the world :

*"The quality of mercy is not strained,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath : it is twice blest ;  
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes :  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest : it becomes  
The thronèd monarch better than his crown ;  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings ;  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway ;  
It is enthronèd in the heart of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself ;  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation : we do pray for mercy ;  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much  
To mitigate the justice of thy plea ;  
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice  
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there."*

Shylock was unmoved by this appeal, and a further offer on the part of Bassanio of ten times the amount of the bond met with an icy refusal.

The knife was ready and the scales were at hand, and Shylock could hardly conceal the impatience of his cruel heart. If he had been less intent upon his revenge he might have perceived that Portia was sounding him.

Twice she gave him warning, but his cruelty blinded him. Taking the bond in her hand, she examined it, and then said with meaning emphasis: "Shylock, there's thrice thy money offered thee"; and a few minutes later: "Take thrice thy money; bid me tear the bond." It was a Christian gentleness which Shylock had never experienced, and he thought it but weakness. He made a final declaration:

*"By my soul, I swear  
There is no power in the tongue of man  
To alter me: I stay here on my bond."*

Portia turned to examine more closely the letter of the bond, and, after another warning, held Shylock to it with a firmness far beyond his own. According to the deed, the pound of flesh was to be cut from the merchant "nearest his heart," but it made no mention of a surgeon.

*"Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,  
To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death."*

"On *your* charge." This was another warning note, for the bond, while it made no mention of a surgeon, at the same time gave Shylock no right to shed the blood.

"Is it so nominated in the bond?" asked the malice-blinded Jew.

*"It is not so expressed: but what of that?  
'Twere good you do so much for charity."*

"I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond," was the reply. Nothing was to be taken for granted, according

to Shylock; the bond expressed everything which should be nominated, for he had drawn it carefully, and he was willing to stand by his bond. Portia now swept rapidly to the point towards which she had been advancing. She gave her judgment, coldly and sternly.

The pound of flesh belonged to Shylock, it was to be cut off nearest the merchant's heart, but two conditions were imposed by the bond, because there was no mention made concerning them: first, there must not be the taking of one single drop of blood; and, second, the weight must be, to the turning of a hair, a single pound. If Shylock cut beyond the pound's weight or shed one drop of Christian blood he went beyond the letter of his bond, and therefore brought himself within the grasp of a law of Venice which declared the confiscation of his lands and goods as penalty upon him who attempted to injure the life of a citizen.

Nay, further, Shylock already stood within the pale of a broken law, for it was enacted by the Venetian code that if it were proved against an alien that by direct or indirect attempt he had sought the life of any citizen, that his goods were confiscate and his life lay at the sole mercy of the Duke. Thus the Jew had overreached himself to a fatal extent, and the bond which threatened Antonio became a hangman's noose around the neck of his persecutor.

Shylock strove in vain to evade the consequences of his attempt. He was now willing to take the money which had been offered, he would be content with the bare principal, he would do anything to save his own goods and lands. With a cry of despair he said: "Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that: you take my life when you do take the means whereby I live."

## The Merchant of Venice 22

But judgment, stern and sweeping, was heaped on to him, and although it was well deserved for the throb of pity for the poor old alien who, beggared and doubly outcast, stood overwhelmed before the jeering faces of the court. Suddenly the blow struck to his brain and he staggered from his place.

"I am not well," he said, and as he left the court defeated and bound under penalty to become a Christian, the mocking cry of Gratiano rang in his ears :

*"In christening shalt thou have two godfathers :  
Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more.  
To bring thee to the gallows, not the font."*

Gratiano saw nothing in the Jew but his avarice, his cruelty, and his race, and he forgot in the moment of his own triumph that charity which forbears to insult a fallen foe.

Antonio, with the heavy weight of a cruel death lifted from him, stood overwhelmed with gratitude, but Bassanio thanked again and again the lawyer whose genius had saved his friend. He offered the three thousand ducats to Portia as a fee, and her refusal might have opened his eyes to the fact that she was not as she seemed.

*"He is well paid that is well satisfied,  
And I, delivering you, am satisfied,  
And therein do account myself well paid :  
My mind was never yet more mercenary.  
I pray you, know me when we meet again.  
I wish you well, and so I take my leave."*

But Bassanio insisted that something must be accepted from them, and finally Portia said that she would take

Antonio's gloves and Bassanio's ring which she saw glittering upon his finger, and wear them for their sakes.

At this Bassanio drew back, for the ring was the last gift he had received from his wife, and he had promised that he would never part with it. When she had put it on his finger she had made him vow neither to give nor sell nor lose it. With a smile Portia replied that an excuse like that was often urged to save a gift :

*"That 'scuse serves many men to save their gifts.  
An if your wife be not a mad woman,  
And know how well I have deserved the ring,  
She would not hold out enemy for ever,  
For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you !"*

And she turned away as though affronted. At the intercession of Antonio the ring was sent after her by the hand of Gratiano, and when Portia and Nerissa returned to Belmont they were in high glee, for each had received the ring the husbands swore should never leave their fingers.

It was late at night when they reached the gates of Belmont, and the palace never looked more beautiful. The moon was shining brightly and a sweet wind did gently kiss the trees. Music was playing in the still groves, and Lorenzo and Jessica, untouched by thoughts of the peril of Antonio, the anxiety of Bassanio, and the betrayal of Shylock, were sitting, in the selfish glamour of their wedded love, where the moonlight seemed to sleep upon a mossy bank.

*"Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
Creep in our ears : soft stillness and the night*

*Become the touches of sweet harmony.  
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold :  
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins ;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls ;  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."*

Portia and Nerissa entered the garden, and their hearts were glad when they saw the lights of home.

*"That light we see is burning in my hall.  
How far that little candle throws his beams !  
So shines a good deed in a naughty world."*

But hardly had they reached their rooms when the sound of a trumpet was heard, and Bassanio and Antonio, with their friends, came galloping to the gates. They had brave news to announce, and their impatience made their progress seem a snail's pace. Antonio was saved and Portia must be told the news. She came, in all the magnificence of her best attire, a striking contrast to the robed figure of the court in Venice.

But the first words of welcome were barely spoken when a sharp quarrel broke out between Nerissa and Gratiano. It was about what Gratiano called a hoop of gold, a paltry ring whose posy was for all the world like cutler's poetry upon a knife: "Love me, and leave me not." But Nerissa showed that she had a very different estimation of its value.

*"What talk you of the posy or the value ?  
You swore to me, when I did give it you,*



quarter of Venice where Shylock brooded in poverty and sorrow, a forsaken, desolate outcast. "Hath not a Jew eyes ? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions ? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is ?"

# King Lear

TOWARDS the castle of a King of Britain many gaily clad companies of horsemen are riding, and within the courtyard is the King himself. His name is Lear, a man of Keltic blood and race, with all the self-will and passionate impetuosity of the Kelt. He is a strong and stately figure, bearing the weight of fourscore years lightly, although he says that he has reached a time of life when he would fain lay down his burden of responsibility and unburthened crawl towards death. He has had many years of success in government, and things have gone well with him. Now he would retire while the sun shines, and there is about him loyalty, affection, dignity, and wealth. As a stately ship, laden with a rich cargo, draws near the harbour, so Lear would find a secure place of shelter; but it was not to be, for against that brave vessel which has buffeted aside so many waves, the fiat has gone forth, and soon the wild forces of a destroying tempest will be let loose against him. Love will turn to hate, reverence to contempt, obedience to defiance, and the poor old King will be hurled away broken and shipwrecked. We shall see him plunging like a wave-beaten hulk, with tattered sails and broken masts, now sheltered for a little

as the storm lulls, and again whirled away until he sinks and vanishes in the gloom.

When the story opens, King Lear is surrounded by his faithful knights in his magnificent palace. He has called them together to witness an act of renunciation on his part, namely, the partition of his kingdom. Goneril and Regan, his elder daughters, have arrived with their husbands, the Duke of Albany, a noble and generous man, and the Duke of Cornwall, a cruel and relentless tyrant. His youngest daughter, Cordelia, is on the point of being betrothed, either to the King of France or the Duke of Burgundy, who are both suitors for her hand in marriage.

Lear's chief advisers are the Earl of Kent, a comparatively young man, and the Earl of Gloucester, an aged nobleman. Gloucester has two sons: Edgar, the elder and legitimate, a young man of great nobility of character, loving, unsuspecting, and chivalrous; and Edmund, the younger and illegitimate, bold, treacherous, and cruel, one who on account of his banishment and the disgrace of his birth had developed an evil nature and fostered a bitter hatred against any who occupied a more favourable position than himself. Sunk into the pit of bitterness he became a subtle and cynical villain, ever on the outlook to work mischief. It is mainly through his evil that the story becomes a tragedy of blood and sorrow. He early set a trap for his brother, and Edgar was compelled to flee from home; then he became the instrument whereby his father was disgraced and blinded. Afterwards his treachery involved the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany, and it was by his connivance that Cordelia and Lear met their deaths.

The Earl of Kent is a faithful friend and true knight

whose fidelity to Lear was unwavering. No banishment could impair his love and no rebuff vanquish it. Himself honest as the day, he was quick to discern faithful love, and equally alert to detect treachery ; and the foul dealing of Regan, Goneril, Edmund, and Oswald was quickly realised by him. He was faithful, even to death, for his answer to Albany, when offered the rule of the kingdom with Edgar, on the death of Lear, is very significant of the strength of his devotion :

*" I have a journey, sir, shortly to go ;  
My master calls me : I must not say no."*

He was unmarried, and described himself in these words :  
" I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly : that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in, and the best of me is diligence. I am not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing, nor so old to dote on her for anything ; I have years on my back forty-eight."

King Lear had determined to divide his kingdom into three portions, each portion a dower for one of his daughters ; with a train of one hundred knights as attendants he purposed to enjoy the friendly hospitality of his daughters and to spend the remainder of his days in visiting their palaces. But before he made the final disposition he called together his court in order to ask his daughters before all his knights and courtiers this question :

*" Which of you shall we say doth love us most ?  
That we our largest bounty may extend  
Where nature doth with merit challenge."*

It was a childish, foolish question, and it received, as might have been expected, fulsome expressions of devotion from hearts charged full with hypocrisy and greed. Goneril replied :

*“ Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter ;  
Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty ;  
Beyond what can be valued, rich and rare ;  
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour ;  
As much as child e’er loved, or father found ;  
A love that makes breath poor and speech unable ;  
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.”*

And then Regan, not to be outdone, followed in the same exalted strain :

*“ In my true heart  
I find she names my very deed of love ;  
Only she comes too short : that I profess  
Myself an enemy to all other joys  
Which the most precious square of sense possesses,  
And find I am alone felicitate  
In your dear highness’ love.”*

These protestations of affection seem to have been received by Lear without suspicion, but Cordelia heard them with contempt. Her true nature recoiled from any seeming participation with hypocrisy, and she refused to use her honest love as a means of furthering her material interests. It was a degradation of affection. Thus when the King asked her what she could say to draw a third more opulent than her sisters she answered briefly and, as it seemed to her father, ungraciously, “ Nothing, my lord.”



*And in thy best consideration check  
This hideous rashness : answer my life my judgment  
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least ;  
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound  
Reverbs no hollowness."*

But the King would suffer no remonstrance ; half drawing his sword he made for the Earl and would have struck him had not Albany and Cornwall rushed between. Kent concluded his speech by accepting banishment :

*" Fare thee well, King : sith thou wilt thus appear,  
Freedom lives hence, and banishment lives here."*

Then turning to Cordelia, who stood white-faced and sorrow-stricken at the sad sight of her father's mad rage, the banished nobleman lifted up his hands in blessing, and at the same time flung a warning to Regan and Goneril :

*" The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,  
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said. . . .  
And your large speeches may your deeds approve  
That good effects may spring from words of love.  
Thus Kent, O Princes, bids you all adieu ;  
He'll shape his old course in a country new."*

As Kent went forth to his exile the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy entered with their train of knights, and Lear proceeded to offer Cordelia as though she were a slave. The love of the Duke of Burgundy was of that wavering quality which is blown into flying spray by the wind of selfishness, and the knowledge that Cordelia was penniless and dowered only with a father's





light in thick darkness, his genius illuminates but also adds to the intensity of the gloom. His wit was sometimes expressed in scraps of song, as when he said :

*" Have more than thou showest,  
Speak less than thou knowest,  
Lend less than thou owest,  
Ride more than thou goest,  
Learn more than thou trowest,  
Set less than thou throwest,"*

or when he taught the King in these words of bitter philosophy :

*" That lord that counsell'd thee  
To give away thy land,  
Come place him here by me ;  
Do thou for him stand :  
The sweet and bitter fool  
Will presently appear ;  
The one in motley here,  
The other found out there."*

Lear saw the application, and resenting the title of " bitter fool," cried out, " Dost thou call me fool, boy ? " to which the Jester replied :

*" All thy other titles thou hast given away ;  
That thou wast born with."*

Charles Lamb says of this character, " this pleasant honest fool poured out his heart even in the presence of Goneril herself, in many a bitter taunt and jest which cut to the quick : such as comparing the King to the hedge-sparrow, who feeds the young of the cuckoo till they grow old enough, and then has its head bit off





"What need one?" said Regan with quiet scorn. To which inquiry the King replied:

*"O reason not the need: our basest beggars  
Are in the poorest things superfluous.  
Allow not nature more than nature needs,  
Man's life's as cheap as beast's: thou art a lady  
If only to go warm were gorgeous,  
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st  
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But for true need——"*

Here the King's wrath choked his utterance. The passion surged up in his heart and flooded his brain. He lost himself and began to speak wild and whirling words, and that madness which always lay as a black terror on his mind began to stir itself like an evil beast within its lair. At that moment the heavens became overclouded. Heavy banks of dark cloud swept up from the sea, and the low growl of thunder was heard in the distance.

"O fool, I shall go mad!" cried out the heart-broken King, and Cornwall said to his wife and sister-in-law: "Let us withdraw; 'twill be a storm." Thus deftly Shakespeare indicates the breaking forth of the tempest of madness in the sorely tried brain of the old King.

Lear called his knights to horse and impatiently strode from the courtyard, and as he went out the bleak winds swept the moor, the night clouds rolled on with horrid blackness, and the swift lightning leaped from the bosom of the dark thundercloud.

"Alack," said the Earl of Gloucester, "the night comes on, and the bleak winds do sorely rattle; for many miles about there's scarce a bush."

Regan replied with a scornful laugh and toss of the head :

*" O sir, to wilful men  
The injuries that they themselves procure  
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors :  
He is attended with a desperate train ;  
And what they may incense him to, being apt  
To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear."*

And Cornwall added the final words, in order that there might be no possible shelter for Lear :

*" Shut up your doors, my lord ; 'tis a wild night :  
My Regan counsels well : come out o' the storm."*

Outside, the storm increased in fury, fierce gusts of wind shook the strongest walls, the rain swept in torrents, the wild glare of lightning and the deep continuous rolling of the thunder made even the wild animals crouch in terror in their leafy coverts. Lear and his knights were scattered over the heath that stretched around the castle and presently only the mad King and the Fool were left together. Kent, seeking them, encountered one of the knights, who shouted that he had just seen the King in one of the wildest parts of the moor. The Fool was jesting, and Lear with white hair streaming in the wind and rain, and almost naked, was shrieking out a wild defiance of the elements. Yet all the while the thought of the foul ingratitude of his daughters held the foremost place in his shattered mind and broken heart.

With a plunge the knight was gone. Kent, stout brave soldier though he was, found his courage wavering as the tempest increased in fury ; such glaring sheets

of flame, such bursts of horrid thunder, such groans of roaring wind and sweeping rain he had never experienced, and his strong nature could hardly bear the ear which they aroused. Suddenly he heard a wild shriek and in the glare of a lightning flash saw the King, drenched with the rain, his white hair swept by the wind, and his eyes blazing with the light of madness. He clenched his fists and shook them in fury at the heavens, while his voice screamed out defiance in wild and dreadful words :

*“ Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks ! rage ! blow !  
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
Till you have drenched our steeples, drown’d the cocks !  
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,  
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Singe my white head ! And thou, all-shaking thunder  
Smite flat the thick rotundity o’ the world !  
Crack nature’s moulds, all germins spill at once  
That make ungrateful man !  
Spit fire ! spout rain !  
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters :  
I tax you not, you elements, with unkindness ;  
I never gave you kingdom, call’d you children,  
You owe me no subscription ; then let fall  
Your horrible pleasure ; here, I stand, your slave,  
A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man :  
But yet I call you servile ministers,  
That have with two pernicious daughters join’d  
Your high-engendered battles ’gainst a head  
So old and white as this. O ! O ! ’tis foul ! ”*

It was pitiful, and Kent heard him with a breaking heart. A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man,



ful ire of his father, sad fruit of the wicked devices of Edmund, his half-brother.

Kent, Lear, and the Jester crowded into the hut and here ensued one of the most heart-moving scenes in literature. Outside the storm still raged, and the half-terrified utterances of the Jester, the wild laughter and weird songs of the pretended madman, Edgar, and the real ravings of the old King present a picture of horror and sadness which only the highest genius could express in words. Suddenly, with a terrifying scream, Lear tore off all his clothing and stood utterly naked. A step was heard outside, and the Earl of Gloucester, torch in hand, stood at the entrance of the hut. He had left his castle in defiance of the orders of Goneril and Regan and come out to find the King. Together they quieted and soothed Lear with gentle words, and took him to a farmhouse near by, and without discovering the identity of his son Edgar, Gloucester returned to his castle.

The plots of Edmund were now fast ripening. Cordelia and a French army had landed in England in response to a letter sent off by Kent invoking assistance for Lear. Gloucester was accused of this and arrested and brought before Cornwall and Regan. Bound securely, he was taunted for his treachery by Regan, who spat upon him and tore his beard. Cornwall in a fury of brutal rage tore out one of his eyes and stamped upon it. His horrified retainers protested at the barbarity and drew their swords. In the fight which ensued Cornwall was fatally wounded, but not before he had torn out the other eye, and thus bereft of the most precious of all the senses, the unhappy Earl of Gloucester was thrust out of his own castle gates to beg







clothed him in the rich raiments of a King. His daughter Cordelia bent over him and soothed him with her gentle voice and tender caressing hand. With great tears in her eyes she kissed him, and when he stirred uneasily in his sleep it was her voice, soft, gentle and low that whispered loving greeting. Lear thought he saw a spirit of the heavenly world and could not realise that he was still upon the earth. He rose from his couch and tried to kneel at Cordelia's feet. With her hot tears falling Cordelia cried out :

*"O, look upon me, sir,  
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.  
No, sir, you must not kneel."*

But the poor old King could not grasp the significance of the kindly words :

*"Pray do not mock me :  
I am a very foolish, fond old man,  
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less ;  
And, to deal plainly  
I fear I am not in my perfect mind."*

He tried to remember, but could not recall where he did lodge last night, and it was only by degrees that his mind assumed some strength and clearness. But then, as he recognised his daughter, a new fear shook his heart. Cordelia had cause to hate him though her sisters had not, and now her turn had come. He trembled with apprehension although her gentle words had no threatening in them. Looking up in her face and into eyes suffused with tears, he said :



*As if we were God's spies : and we'll wear out,  
In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,  
That ebb and flow by the moon."*

As they were led out, guarded, Edmund, the hard-hearted villain, called a captain, with whom he had had previous converse, and directed him to slay Cordelia in the prison. He saw in her an obstacle to the complete possession of the kingly power at which he now aimed.

Goneril, the wife of Albany, had plotted the death of her sister Regan by poison, and meant to marry Edmund when her husband had been removed. But Albany had been warned, and Edmund was accused by him of treachery. Gloucester agreed to maintain his good name by combat in the lists. On the day appointed, Edgar, as an unknown knight of noble birth, took up the challenge. He said that Edmund was a foul traitor, false to the gods, false to his prince, to his father, and to his brother, from head to foot a most toad-spotted traitor who deserved only death. In the fight which followed Edgar gave him a fatal wound. The death of Edmund Gloucester was forthwith reported, and when the news came to the ears of Goneril she committed suicide. But Edmund was not dead when he was carried from the lists. Before he breathed his last he called Albany and told him fearful news concerning Cordelia. That a soldier had already received orders to hang her in the prison and to report that she had taken her own life.

Hardly had the traitor delivered this final message when a loud despairing cry was heard and Lear was seen staggering forward, his eyes blazing with an awful

light. He was bearing the dead body of Cordelia in his arms. His new-found peace had been swept away by this last terrible calamity, and once again his brain had given way beneath the heavy load. He shrieked aloud in his agony and cursed all who stood about him. He even repelled the faithful Kent. He cried upon Cordelia to look once more upon him, to open her eyes, to speak one little word. He bent his ear to catch what he thought was the low breathing of her accents. His voice rang out in agonising appeal:

*"Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!  
What is 't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.  
I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee."*

He waited in vain, for the soft voice was stilled for ever and her gentle spirit had fled beyond recall. At length the poor heart-broken King and father realised the truth, and the darkness rolled in upon him, blotting out the sense and feeling of mind and heart. His voice rang out with a last despairing cry, and then Death came to him.

*"No, no, no life?  
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,  
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more  
Never, never, never, never, never!"*

A few murmuring accents, a momentary glimpse of a bright celestial vision of Cordelia which made the King cry, "Look there, look there!" and his body sank beside his daughter.

Edgar cried, "My lord, my lord, look up, my lord!"

but Kent lifted his eyes from the worn face of the dead King and said :

*“Vex not his ghost : O let him pass ! he hates him  
That would upon the rack of this tough world  
Stretch him out longer.”*

In darkness and in storm, as a wave-beaten vessel sinks in the sea, so the wearied tempest-stricken old King sank to his rest. Treason had done its worst. He had learned the preciousness of a love which once he had cast from him, and the strength of a devotion which he had too lightly esteemed. Time had restored to him love and devotion for a little space, and then once again they had slipped from his grasp ; but as he passes from our sight in a passionate agony of yearning for the peace and light and love which dwelt for him in the pure and holy heart of Cordelia, we feel that the great writer in the words “ Look there, look there ! ” lifts up the dark curtain for an instant that the light of the Eternal may shine through and speak of hope Beyond.



gentle and sunny, and truly noble, he yet concealed in the depth of his nature black and cruel forces, which, slumbering for a time, might break forth, carrying with them sorrow and death. His wife was a pure and gracious lady, named Hermione, whose character was full of quiet, dignified strength. She thought evil of none, and had given all her heart to her husband. Her intellect was strong, and her quick intelligence never failed to divine the truth. She was calm and self-possessed, not given to tears nor afraid of death, scornful of untruth and firm in womanly honour, innocent and unsuspecting, frank and open-hearted. She had one son, the Prince Mamillius, an honest, gallant boy, who drew all hearts to him. He loved his mother with a passionate devotion, and was wont to climb upon her knee to tell her stories of sprites and goblins, and of a man who dwelt close by a churchyard. He would drop his voice into an awed whisper and peer around as though he feared a ghost would leap out, and his mother would pretend to be terrified, and shiver, and then laugh and strain her darling to her breast. To Mamillius his mother was the noblest, kindest, purest being in the whole world, and he loved her with all his heart. And he was his father's favourite, too, and well described in these words :

*"He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter :  
Now my sworn friend, and then mine enemy ;  
My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all :  
He makes a July's day short as December ;  
And with his varying childness cures in me  
Thoughts that would thicken my blood."*

When King Leontes was a boy his bosom companion



Polixenes had not yet replied, and said, "He'll stay, my lord."

Leontes kept back the storm of passion which was raging in his heart, for the graceful courtesy of Hermione seemed to him to cover a dishonest love for Bohemia, and he reminded his Queen of her reluctance to say "yes" when he had pressed her to become his wife. It seemed to him to be a striking contrast to the ready assent of Polixenes, and he recalled the fact that three crabbed months had soured themselves to death before he could make Hermione open her hand to clasp his and say, "I am yours for ever." Love, his jealous mind suggested, is ever ready to say yes, and that is why Polixenes, despite the claims of home and kingdom, has readily consented to remain in Sicily.

It was not long before his jealous rage broke out, fierce as a volcano, and as unheeding as an earthquake. Despite the warning of a wise and faithful lord, Camillo, he determined to accuse Polixenes of treachery. Then he resolved to assassinate him by poison, and charged Camillo, who was his cupbearer, to prepare a poisoned chalice and give it to Bohemia to drink. Camillo afterwards confessed the plot to Polixenes and implored him to fly at once from Sicily; his ships were prepared and his seamen had expected his departure for many days. Nothing would change the deadly intention of Leontes, and Camillo promised to accompany him. Together they slipped out of the palace, hiding for a short time behind a tuft of pines, in order to avoid a company of soldiers, then down to the harbour gates, which were opened for them on the command of the Lord Camillo, and so to their ships. The anchors were dragged up, and all sail hoisted, and soon they



"We do not know," said Paulina, "how he may soften at the sight of the child, the silence often of pure innocence persuades when speaking fails."

The Lady Paulina was a clever, high-spirited woman who loved the Queen and served her with great fidelity. She knew that the King was wrong in his wicked suspicions, and expressed herself so boldly that Antigonus had been warned by Leontes not to allow her to come into his presence. She braved the King's anger, however, and pushed past the guards who would have denied her entrance, and laid the babe before him. At the sight of the child Leontes became furious and swore that he would rid himself of the vile nest of traitors around him. He called Antigonus by this dishonourable epithet, but Paulina spoke out boldly, and said that the traitor was the King himself.

*"For he*

*The sacred honour of himself, his queen's,  
His hopeful son's, his babe's, betrays to slander,  
Whose sting is sharper than the sword's; and will not—  
For, as the case now stands, it is a curse  
He cannot be compell'd to 't—once remove  
The root of his opinion, which is rotten  
As ever oak or stone was sound."*

Leontes commanded her to be silent, and said that he would have her hanged or burned at the stake. "I care not," replied Paulina; "it is an heretic that makes the fire, not she which burns in't." The soldier's seized her and thrust her out of the King's presence. Then the wrath of Leontes was turned upon the child, and shouting that it was the daughter of Polixenes, and not his, he ordered them to fling it into a furnace



"Good Antigonus,

Since fate, against thy better disposition  
Hath made thy person for the preservation  
Of my poor babe, according to thine wish  
Places remote enough are in Sicilia  
There weep and leave it crying: and for the time  
Is counted lost for ever. Perdita  
I prithee, call't. For this virgin's sake  
Put on thee by my lord. She never shall be  
Thy wife Paulina more."

Her words ended, the Queen with her vision  
wrung her hands in agony, and her vision  
melt into the air and vanished. He moved from  
his couch, the groaning vessel was plunging into the  
trough of the seas, the carriage rolled, and the wind  
shrieked as it tore past. He passed his hand over his  
brow, and felt for the child and passed his eyes  
around the cabin. Nothing moved, but he  
saw, but the name, "Perdita," entered and remained in  
his thoughts. He wrote the name upon a slip of  
paper and pinned it on the child's robe. Then turning  
back he gave himself up to sorrow until the  
day.

When morning broke the mariners saw that they  
were near to a savage desert coast upon which the  
seas broke wildly. Choosing a sheltered cove they  
ran the vessel close to shore and Antigonus entered.  
They bade him make haste, for the shore was a very  
dangerous one and the wind was now rising to a  
tempest. If they were long upon the coast they  
could prevent the ship being broken by the waves and  
cast upon the rocks. Antigonus had no choice but



by a tempest of the mind far worse than that which hurled the vessel upon the rockbound coast. His jealousy made him miserable, and moreover, doubts were rising in his mind as to whether he was acting justly to his dear wife, Hermione. In order to satisfy himself he despatched an embassy to consult the great oracle of Apollo at Delphos on the question of the innocence or guilt of the Queen, and on the return of Cleomenes and Dion, the messengers, summoned a great meeting of his lords and officers.

The Queen, guarded by soldiers, was placed at the bar of judgment and the indictment against her was read. "Hermione, Queen to the worthy Leontes, King of Sicilia, thou art here accused and arraigned of high treason," and "of conspiring with Camillo to take away the life of our sovereign lord, the King, thy royal husband." Hermione heard the cruel indictment read, and asserted her innocence in quiet dignified words.

*"Since what I am to say must be but that  
Which contradicts my accusation, and  
The testimony on my part no other  
But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me,  
To say, 'Not Guilty': mine integrity,  
Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it,  
Be so received. But thus, if Powers Divine  
Behold our human actions, as they do,  
I doubt not then but innocence shall make  
False accusation blush, and tyranny  
Tremble at patience. . . .  
For life, I prize it  
As I weigh grief, which I would spare: for honour,*



jured, but a loud cry of women startled him, and the Lady Paulina returned, wringing her hands and exclaiming that Hermione was dead. The poor Queen, she said, overwhelmed by all her sorrows, had died of a broken heart. In rage she turned upon the stricken King and called him tyrant.

*"But, O thou tyrant !*

*Do not repent these things, for they are heavier  
Than all thy woes can stir : therefore betake thee  
To nothing but despair. A thousand knees  
Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,  
Upon a barren mountain, and still winter  
In storm perpetual, could not move the gods  
To look that way thou wert."*

But the wild horror of the King's face terrified her and quieted her tongue. He was a broken-hearted man now and stood with humbled form before his courtiers. Leontes tried to force himself to speak, but his trembling lips refused their office. At length a sad cry broke from him.

*"Thou didst speak but well*

*When most the truth ; which I receive much better  
Than to be pitied of thee. Prithee, bring me  
To the dead bodies of my queen and son :  
One grave shall be for both ; upon them shall  
The causes of their death appear, unto  
Our shame perpetual. Once a day I'll visit  
The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there  
Shall be my recreation : so long as nature  
Will bear up with this exercise, so long*



*"The white sheet bleaching on the hedge,  
With heigh! the sweet birds, O, how they sing!  
Doth set my pugging tooth on edge;  
For a quart of ale is a dish for a king.*

*"The lark, that tirra-lyra chants,  
With heigh! with heigh! the thrush and the jay,  
Are summer songs for me and my aunts,  
While we lie tumbling in the hay."*

In sheer joy of living he shouted out his refrain of "heigh, heigh," and as he walked along he told the story of his character with many a chuckle.

"My father named me Autolycus; who being, as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles. With die and drab I purchased this caparison, and my revenue is the silly cheat. Gallows and knock are too powerful on the highway; beating and hanging are terrors to me: for the life to come, I sleep out the thought of it."

He glanced along the road and gave a shout of triumph as he saw a heavy, stolid-looking rustic coming towards him. He was a young shepherd, a perfect clown in appearance. He looked as though he were trying to work out a very difficult sum or striving to remember some intricate problem. As he drew near, Autolycus heard him mutter, "Three pound of sugar—five pound of currants—rice—saffron—mace—nutmegs—ginger—prunes—raisins." He was so much taken up with his difficult task that he did not notice Autolycus until a loud cry startled him. The pedlar had flung himself on the ground and was howling as though he were in dreadful pain. He said, with many groans, that he had been beaten and robbed by a footpad. He besought the





Shylock gave her his keys and bid her guard the house

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with her had enabled the shepherd to become a rich man, and the fame of his beautiful daughter had spread far and near. So great was her beauty that the only son of the King of Bohemia, the young Prince Florizel, who had seen her when he was out hunting with his falcons, promptly fell in love and vowed that he would marry her. Disguised as a shepherd and calling himself Doricles he availed himself of every opportunity to absent himself from the court, and spent much time with Perdita. She loved him, but she feared the resentment of the King. Florizel was the heir to the throne and therefore destined for high position. It would be foolish, in the King's eyes, for the Prince to marry a simple shepherd maid.

Already Polixenes had discovered the cause of Florizel's frequent absences from the court, and he and the Lord Camillo, disguised as farmers, had set out to visit the old shepherd at the sheep-shearing feast. Perdita was the hostess of the day and right worthily she discharged her duties. The King and Camillo were charmed with her brightness and grace. Polixenes said: "This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever ran on the greensward. Nothing she does or seems but smacks of something greater than herself, too noble for this place." Camillo agreed and called Perdita "the Queen of curds and cream." Her ready wit delighted the King and soon they were talking together with great spirit upon the subject of gardening. Perdita showed her powers of thought and of poetic description in the way she spoke of flowers:

"O Proserpina,  
For the flowers now that frighted thou let'st fall  
From Dis's waggon! Daffodils,



make profession of his love. The Prince was not backward and his ardour drew from Perdita the avowal of her answering love. They would then and there have plighted their troth but the King deemed it time to interfere. Throwing off his disguise he upbraided the Prince for his folly and forbade him to think further of the shepherdess. Then with a threat to the old shepherd that hanging should be his portion, he strode angrily away.

All stood amazed at this unlooked-for interruption to the harmony of the feast. Perdita was first to recover, and with quiet dignity she turned to her lover.

*“ This dream of mine  
Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,  
But milk my ewes and weep.”*

The Prince protested, however, that he was in no wise dismayed, and that he was fully determined to fly with his love on a vessel that was riding at anchor in the harbour. The Lord Camillo here intervened with wise and prudent counsels, but to no purpose, for Florizel would not be moved. Seeing this, at length the old courtier resolved to guide the torrent since he could not stem its current, and he proposed that the Prince should hie him to the court of King Leontes, in Sicily, as his father's ambassador. In order that the visit should seem natural Camillo offered to write down careful instructions as to what the Prince should do and say, and he offered, moreover, to provide for the expenses of the journey. In the meantime he would use his best efforts to reconcile Polixenes to the accomplished facts.

This offer was received by Florizel with more gratitude



the King's threats, determined to confess to him the story of how they had found Perdita upon the seashore. They had barely set out on their way to the palace when they fell in with Autolycus, who played further upon their fears and induced them to give him the conduct of the affair. He told them that the King had gone on board ship and thither they followed him with all the haste that they could, while he chuckled to himself at the thought that it should go hard with him but that he would profit as broker between such simpletons and the King.

They were just in time, for on reaching the harbour they found that the ship in which were Polixenes, Camillo, and others of the King's suite, was on the point of weighing anchor in pursuit of the fugitives. Autolycus found little difficulty in getting his party aboard, but even while the story was being unfolded to the King, the sails were shaken out and the three men had perforce to join the company of voyagers to the distant isle of Sicily.

A stern chase is a long chase and the Prince and Perdita had made good their start and without mishap or sign of pursuit had reached the court of Leontes, where they received a right loving welcome. But even while they exchanged greetings word was brought that Polixenes had arrived and desired that Leontes would lay hands upon his wayward son.

This was a crushing blow for the lovers, who began to despair of ever being united. Leontes gazed in strange manner upon Perdita, and when Florizel prayed that he would intercede with Polixenes he said that he could make no promise, but that he would be glad to take the shepherd maid in his own care if his brother King thought little of her.



a curtain upon a low pedestal stands the Queen, dressed in her robes of State. The Kings enter with their train, and Prince Florizel and Perdita follow. The curtain is drawn aside by the Lady Paulina and a hush falls upon all, and Leontes stands silent and amazed, so wonderful is the likeness to his beloved lost Hermione.

At length he exclaimed,

*“ O, thus she stood,*

*Even with such life of majesty, warm life,  
As now it coldly stands, when first I woo'd her !  
I am ashamed : does not the stone rebuke me  
For being more stone than it ? O royal piece,  
There's magic in thy majesty, which has  
My evils conjured to remembrance, and  
From thy admiring daughter took the spirits,  
Standing like stone with thee.”*

Perdita knelt before the statue and would have kissed the fair blue-veined hand that hung so near her.

*“ Give me leave,”* she said,

*“ And do not say 'tis superstition, that  
I kneel and then implore her blessing. Lady,  
Dear queen, that ended when I but began,  
Give me that hand of yours to kiss.”*

Paulina stayed her with an anxious cry. *“ The statue is but newly fixed, the colour is not dry,”* she said, and would have drawn the curtain.

*“ Nay,”* said Leontes, *“ let 't alone,  
For this affliction has a taste as sweet  
As any cordial comfort. Still, methinks,  
There is an air comes from her : what fine chisel  
Could ever yet cut breath ? Let no man mock me,  
For I will kiss her.”*

The scene was trying indeed for Queen Hermione, and every moment she looked more like a living, breathing woman. Paulina saw that she must bring the ordeal to a close. She said that at her word the statue would descend and take the King by the hand. She commanded the musicians to play, and a joyous tune burst forth.

"'Tis time ; descend ; be stone no more," said Paulina. The Queen came down and, with a wonderful love beaming in her eyes, flung herself upon the bosom of Leontes. And then, although he did not know the full story, the King realised that by a marvellous Providence his long-lost Hermione had been restored to him, and with her, the daughter he had cast away. His heart was full of joy, and his repentance of many years was now crowned with a happiness far beyond his most sanguine hopes.

And yet through all the years in which the reunited King and Queen dwelt so happily together in the fair palace on the Sicilian shores, I think that Leontes oftentimes recalled with feelings of repentant sorrow that sweet boy Mamillius, who faded beneath the shadow of the dishonour cast upon his mother ; and often longed for the sight of the bright face of the lad who in the old days was all his exercise, his mirth, his matter, that son who made a July's day short as December to the father whose soul was bound up in his, but whose quick passion had caused the lad's death.

## Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

**I**N Denmark, where the waters of the Baltic fret the rockbound coast on their way to the wind-swept North Sea, there stood the strong, dark castle of Elsinore, the fortress and the residence of a King and Queen of Denmark. Its frowning battlements overlooked the tossing waves, and in one place the walls were built upon the dreadful summit of a precipitous cliff which frowned over its base into the sea. It was a place so dangerous that an unguarded step would lead to a dreadful death upon the sharp rocks, or in the sea, which roared so many fathoms beneath.

The King of Denmark at this time was a brave and accomplished soldier whose vigilant care had kept his country free from the invasion of fierce enemies from Norway. The leader of this people was a strong-armed King named Fortinbras and he had long coveted the lands and crown of Denmark. This led at length to a challenge to single combat and it was agreed before the fight that the country and possessions of the defeated King should pass into the hands of the victor. King Hamlet was the conqueror, and Fortinbras was slain, wherefore the Danes for several years had ruled over Norway. But suddenly a great calamity

upon Denmark, for the good King Hamlet, whose custom it was in the afternoon to rest and sleep in the shade of the trees in his orchard, was found in his summer-house dead. There was no mark of wounds upon him, and no trace of an assailant. The mystery was satisfactorily explained to the people by the statement that the King had been stung by a venomous serpent, and so all Denmark mourned the passing of a great and valiant ruler. Chiefly by the aid of a counsellor named Polonius, Claudius, the late King's brother, was raised to the throne, and almost immediately a cloud of threatened invasion rolled down from Norway. Young Fortinbras, nephew of the chief who held the country for Denmark, and son of the King who had been slain in the lists, had long burned to recover the lands lost by his father, and had gathered together a band of resolute adventurers, who were ready for any enterprise which promised battle and spoil. He now sent messengers to King Claudius demanding the return of the honours and lands of Norway, and was prepared to wage war at an early date. At once the soldiers and sailors of Denmark were summoned by Claudius to make ready. Preparations for war were hurried on in every arsenal, brazen cannon were cast, great stores of arms were purchased from foreign merchants, and shipwrights worked day and night, and weekday and Sunday, to provide the ships necessary for the transport of troops and stores and to defend the long coast-line of Denmark.

At this juncture, an event happened which brought astonishment, disgust, and deep sorrow to the late King's son, a young prince of some thirty summers. Overleaping the barriers of relationship and unmindful

of the claims of rightful mourning, the widowed Gertrude, within a month of her husband's tragic death became the wife and Queen of his successor upon the throne. Indeed, so hastily had the marriage been celebrated that it looked as if it must have been arranged some time beforehand, and it was said that the funeral baked meats, when cold, had been utilised to furnish forth the wedding feast. Hardly had the strains of mourning sorrow died away in the dark fortress when the echoes were reawakened by the music of the marriage festivities.

Upon the battlements of the castle the sentinels were wont to pace to and fro, keeping watch and ward by day and night. It is the customary duty of the soldier to be watchman while others sleep, but it began to be noticed that the trusted men whose post was in a distant and remote part of the fortress were strangely reluctant to undertake the midnight watch. It was a cold and exposed place, where the night winds swept in, with chill breath, from the sea, but soldiers are accustomed to heat and cold and to anxious lonely watches beneath the midnight sky. Francisco, Bernardo, and Marcellus were the three men whose duty it was to keep the watch upon this platform, and on two occasions they had been terrified by the strange appearance of the figure of an armed man, which emerged silently from the darkness, shortly after the midnight hour, and moved with slow, noiseless, and majestic steps before them. Something in its appearance moved them strangely and melted their hearts with unnatural fear: it was unknown and yet it seemed familiar, like a knightly soldier, and yet unlike any living warrior they had ever seen. They became like frightened

children, and before they could make up their minds what to do, it had disappeared into the gloom of the night. They kept the secret to themselves, but, brave men though they were, they could not banish the strange nervousness which unmanned them. When they were alone on their watch they listened anxiously for every sound, and longed for the moment of relief to come.

On this night Francisco was the soldier on guard. Not a mouse was stirring and nothing but the sweep of the wind and the roar of the distant waves broke the silence. So absorbed was he in apprehensive fear that he did not notice the deep booming of the bell which tolled the hour of twelve, the time when the guard would be changed. His comrade Bernardo, whose duty it was to relieve him, came slowly through the darkness, peering on this side and that; then suddenly perceiving the motionless form of the sentinel he called out in tones of anxious alarm, "Who's there?"

It is the duty of a sentry at his post to give the challenge, but each man dreaded the other and thus it happened that it was the new-comer who first called out.

"Nay, answer *me*," returned Francisco, "stand and unfold yourself."

When the comrades recognised each other Bernardo inquired if anything had disturbed the watch so far, and urged Francisco to bid Marcellus and Horatio, who had promised to share the midnight vigil with him, to make haste and join him on the battlements. As he spoke the sound of approaching footsteps was heard, and as Francisco was turning away to seek the shelter of the guard-house, the two gentlemen passed him and called out a friendly greeting. Horatio had been away from Denmark for some time, but the stirring events

at Elsinore had recalled him and he had renewed his acquaintance with the officers of the guard. They told him of the mysterious sight which had so shaken the courage of the sentinels, and invited him to share the midnight watch with them. Choosing a sheltered spot the three sat down. Above them a star shone brightly. The cold night wind was blowing and the slow beating of the waves upon the rocks far below disturbed the quiet of the night. Bernardo told the story of the last night in hushed solemn tones. Pointing to the sky, he said :

*“Last night of all,  
When yond same star that’s westward from the Pole,  
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven  
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself  
The bell then beating one—”*

His speech was interrupted by a startled cry from Marcellus, and slowly from the darkness a mailed figure stepped forward along the battlements. In a moment the three men realised that they were looking upon something which bore the likeness of the dead King. The strange yet familiar figure became more clearly outlined so that the face could be seen. Bernardo stammered out the words, “In the same figure, like the King that’s dead,” and Horatio, who up to this time had not believed the story told by the sentinels, was harrowed with fear and wonder. He recognised the armour and knew the battle frown which lay upon the unvizored face. He had once seen his master with such a look upon his visage when in the stress of conflict, and yet he could not believe that he was looking

upon the King. It must be some mysterious thing which had usurped the dead form of the master they mourned. Trembling with fear, and ghastly pale, Horatio cried out :

*"What art thou, that usurp'st this time of night  
Together with that fair and warlike form  
In which the majesty of buried Denmark  
Did sometimes march ? by Heaven, I charge thee,  
Speak !"*

The figure made no reply but passed slowly before the awe-stricken men, and then was swallowed up in the gloom. They conversed in whispers for some time, until once again an astonished cry, this time from Horatio, aroused their terror. The figure reappeared and was challenged to speak by Horatio. It seemed to be on the point of addressing them, when the shrill crowing of the cock, the trumpet to the morn, was heard, and starting like a guilty thing upon a fearful summons, the figure vanished. It was commonly believed that at cock-crow all wandering spirits were compelled to leave the earth, the air, the fire or the sea, and return to the place of their confinement, and Marcellus reminded his companions of another old belief cherished by his countrymen :

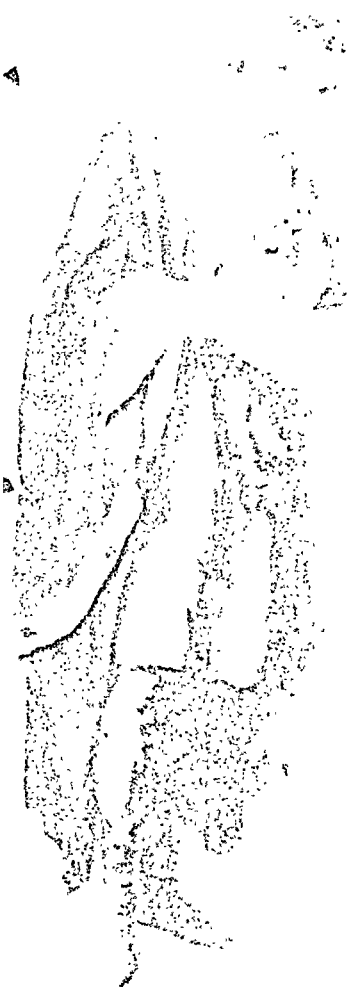
*"Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
The bird of dawning singeth all night long ;  
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad ;  
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,  
No fairy takes nor witch hath power to charm  
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time."*

And now the sky was giving token that the night was nearly over, lances of light were being flung across the dark expanse, and a rosy tinge was lighting up the clouds which lay low upon the eastern horizon. The morn, in russet mantle clad, walked o'er the dew of a high eastward hill; and as Horatio pointed to the golden ridge he reminded his comrades that they owed a duty to their young Prince Hamlet, for it seemed to him that this mysterious spirit, dumb to them, might have a message of import which could be revealed to none save the son of the dead King. The sun rose in beauty over the sea and lighted up the dark corners of the frowning bastions and lofty walls. It revealed the beauty of painted windows and threw great patches of colour upon the polished oaken floors, and was reflected in the many jewels which bedecked the King, Queen, and courtiers, as they assembled in the great hall of the castle.

With smiles and kindly graces the new King was dismissing Cornelius and Voltemand to their duty as ambassadors to Norway, and giving young Laertes, the son of his counsellor, Polonius, permission to return to Paris. With easy grace and fawning smile King Claudius conversed with his courtiers, but his furtive gaze the while would turn to where a dark figure, clad in mourning, stood apart. The sun shining through the windows lighted up that sombre figure and made the King and Queen feel as though a wintry cloud had passed across their sky. It was Hamlet, the dead King's son, who, recalled from the University of Wittenberg by the sad tidings of his father's tragic death, felt even more keenly the terrible disgrace, as he considered it, of his mother's hasty marriage with his uncle. Dark

suspensions brooded in his mind and troubled his soul, and already a deep distrust of his uncle and a feeling of repulsion towards his mother were making life an intolerable burden. He was a Prince of scholarly attainments, handsome in person, generous, accomplished, and popular with all ; charitable in his enmities, free and open in thought and in word, truthful, unsuspicious and charitable, a man whose nature was responsive to all that is generous and true. He was of great intellectual force, attracted by that which touched the deep things of life and character, yet given to ponder over problems until the native hue of resolution was sicklied over with the pale cast of thought, and enterprises of great pitch and moment were turned awry and lost the name of action. His clever wit and readiness, however, never faltered, and in exchange of repartee he always excelled. His nature was strongly emotional as well as intellectual, and the defection or treachery of those whom he loved would affect him wellnigh to the point of madness. He excelled in all graceful accomplishments and was "the expectancy of the State, the observed of all observers." A man of noble and most sovereign reason whose nature was responsive to all that was generous and true, one who loved deeply and honoured his father, mother, and friends ; one made for gentle happiness, unbroken fellowship, steadfast and loyal devotion, enjoyment of the things of life ; and for that tranquil happiness which an unspotted life deserves. But alas, the time was out of joint and he himself said :

*"O cursed spite  
That ever I was born to set it right."*





As he stood in the sunlight of the great hall that day the sombre colour of his sables was indicative of the gloom of his soul. Claudius tried to cheer him by the reminder that the death of a father was the will of Heaven, a common theme of Nature which said "It must be so," and that there were opportunities and duties of State which called Hamlet, the most immediate to the throne, to high position in the court. The Queen in gentle tones also upbraided Hamlet for his sorrow but at the same time suggested that enmity was lurking in his mind.

*"Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
Do not for ever with thy veiled lids  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust :  
Thou know'st 'tis common ; all that lives must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity."*

Hamlet had expressed the desire to leave the court and return to Wittenberg, but the King and Queen pressed him to remain at Elsinore, and at length he consented. Claudius interpreted his tardy consent in his own way and commanded that a great feast should be given, so with a flutter of excitement the gaudy throng of courtiers followed the King and Queen, and Hamlet was left alone. His words showed that he was weary of the world, which was now to him an unweeded garden growing to seed, possessed merely by things rank and gross in nature. He wished for Death and regretted that the Everlasting had "Fixed His canon 'gainst self-slaughter." But his words revealed the fact that his father's death was not the chiefest sorrow of his heart. It was the treachery

and frailty of his mother, who, within a month, before the tears of her sorrow had dried upon her cheeks, had married the man so closely allied to her by the ties of kinship. Hamlet did not know all the dark story yet, but when a son feels that his confidence in his mother is shattered a sadness deep as night falls on his heart.

The sound of armed men drawing near did not arouse him from his reverie until a well-known voice, which he did not recognise at first, startled him by saying, "Hail to your lordship." Looking up, the Prince beheld Horatio, whom he had last seen at Wittenberg, and Marcellus and Bernardo. He gave each a word of greeting, but an expression, "Methinks I see my father," which fell from his lips, while it startled Horatio and his comrades for a moment, gave them the opportunity they had come to seek. It was reminiscence that prompted the phrase, but Horatio, whose mind was full of the awful figure he had seen on the battlements, thought that the Prince at that moment was really looking upon his father. But Hamlet said that he saw him in his mind's eye, and added :

*"He was a man, take him for all in all  
I shall not look upon his like again."*

Horatio said that last night he and his companions had seen the late King upon the battlements, clad in the well-known suit of mail and armed, with the beaver of his helmet raised so that his pale, sorrowful face, pleading eyes and sable-silvered beard could be seen.

It had stayed while one with moderate haste might tell a hundred, and Horatio and the others were convinced that it was the figure of the late King.

Hamlet was so much impressed that he promised to visit them upon the battlements between eleven and twelve that night. The great feast in his honour was to take place about that time, but the Prince determined to see for himself; vague suspicions of treachery on the part of Claudius and Gertrude now possessed his mind as possible verities, and he longed for the night to come. The day passed, the castle was ablaze with lights, and the guns boomed and the trumpets blared as healths were drunk in the great hall.

Ere the hour of midnight had struck Hamlet had stolen from the revellers and with Horatio and Marcellus waited in eager expectancy. He had resolved to speak to the ghostly shape,

*"Though hell itself should gape  
And bid me hold my peace."*

The keen air bit shrewdly upon the battlements and the darkness seemed deeper by contrast with the festive lights within. A short time the three companions conversed, and then the twelve solemn strokes of midnight tolled upon the castle bell. "It draws near the season wherein the spirit hath his wont to walk," said Horatio. Then: "Look, my lord, it comes!"

Hamlet could not mistake the mien and visage which confronted him, all shadowy though it was. With a brief petition to the Powers of Heaven, he boldly called upon the shape to speak to him:

✓ *"King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!"*

The ghost beckoned with its hand but Horatio sought

to restrain the Prince. His fears, however, were brushed aside :

*“Why, what should be the fear?  
I do not set my life at a pin’s fee;  
And for my soul, what can it do to that,  
Being a thing immortal as itself?”*

Seeing that he was determined, Marcellus laid his hands upon the Prince, but he broke away and followed the ghost to another part of the platform.

No further need had he to urge the shade to speak. A torrent of burning words was poured into his affrighted ears and he heard how that the serpent that had stung his father was none other than him who wore the crown of Denmark. His uncle had poured a deadly drug into the King’s ear as he slept, having first stolen the Queen’s affections from her rightful lord, and by a brother’s hand he had been

*“Sent to my account  
With all my imperfections on my head.”*

The ghost of the murdered King called upon Hamlet to avenge the cruel treachery upon his uncle but to contrive nothing against the Queen. She should be left to the judgment of Heaven and to the pricking and stinging of those thorns which were already lodged within her heart. Hamlet, though overwhelmed and horrified by the disclosures of the ghost, resolved to keep the matter secret until he could find proof. He determined to wipe out of his memory all that it else recorded, so that the one supreme fact that he was dedicated to vengeance might possess him entirely. His mind, already shaken by despair and sorrow, reeled under the emotions induced by what he had just seen

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and heard, and he was in a strange mood when Horatio and Marcellus joined him. His wild and whirling words amazed them. He swore them to secrecy, that they would never reveal to any what they had seen that night, and begged them to be silent regarding himself, however strange or odd he might appear. They promised, for they were men of simple faith and honour, and Hamlet was left free to work out his revenge. His first great difficulty was to discover the actual facts, for a message in the midnight hour from a ghostly presence which called itself by his father's name wore a different aspect when looked at in the clear light of the noonday sun. He had but the word of a ghost for the assurance of an unscrupulous murder and for the unfaithfulness of a Queen; a phantom of the gloom for the inspiration to a deadly revenge which would shake the kingdom. How best to fix the truth was the problem which perplexed him. He knew that the King would set a watch upon him, for a guilty conscience needs no accuser, and that he would be careful to avoid all betrayal of the dark secret which lay in his heart. Hamlet thought that the assumption of a madness induced by melancholy might be the best way to tear out the heart of the King's mystery, and very soon circumstances favoured his design.

In happier days he loved and was loved by the Lady Ophelia, an affectionate, tender, and beautiful woman. She was gentle in nature and thought, one who loved the true and admired strength of mind and form, but was not strong in herself and easily yielded to the influence of others.

Her father, Polonius, on the accession of King Claudius, thinking that the exalted position of Hamlet would be

a bar to his union with the daughter of his uncle's counsellor, had forbidden Ophelia to think more of the Prince and had made her promise to deny him access to her presence. Soon after, as she was sewing in her closet, she was surprised by the sudden apparition of the Prince, who burst in upon her with dress dishevelled, wild deportment, and look so piteous that he seemed to be suffering the very torments of hell.

When Polonius heard the story he snatched eagerly at the theory, which, indeed, seemed most plausible, that rejected love had driven Hamlet mad, and there could have been no better instrument for the Prince's purpose.

Meantime two fellow students of the Prince, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, were induced by the King to discover, under the guise of good fellowship, the reason of Hamlet's strange behaviour, which was now much remarked upon. They were subtle with the cunning of commonplace and the alertness of shallowness but they could not play upon Hamlet. They were put to rout in the first encounter. The Prince took a flute and asked Guildenstern to play upon it. He could not, for, as he said, he did not know the instrument. Hamlet said it was as easy as lying. "Govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb: give it breath with your mouth and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops." But Guildenstern protested that he could not command the instrument to any utterance of harmony because he had not the necessary skill.

"Why, look you," returned Hamlet, with bitter scorn, "how unworthy a thing you make of me. You would play upon me: you would seem to know my

stops : you would pluck out the heart of my mystery : you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass : and there is much music, excellent voice in this little organ : yet cannot you make it speak. S'blood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe ? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me."

As he said these words, Polonius came upon the scene to see how his spies were succeeding. Immediately Hamlet put on his antic disposition and Polonius departed no wiser than he came.

The counsellor was an old statesman who had easily transferred his allegiance to the upstart King.

He was worldly wise and his shrewdness was rarely at fault. His honour was of the kind that may be made to fit the humour of a King, and yet upon occasion he could give expression to most exalted sentiments. Often his sounding words would tire his hearers, but the advice which he gave to his son Laertes on leaving the Danish court for Paris shows him to have been vastly more than a mere windbag.

*"Give thy thoughts no tongue,  
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.  
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.  
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel,  
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment  
Of each new-hatched unfledged comrade. Beware  
Of entrance to a quarrel ; but being in,  
Bear't, that the opposed may beware of thee.  
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice :  
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.*

*Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  
 But not express'd in fancy ; rich, not gaudy :  
 For the apparel oft proclaims the man ;  
 And they in France of the best rank and station  
 Are of a most select and generous chief in that.  
 Neither a borrower nor a lender be :  
 For loan oft loses both itself and friend,  
 And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.  
 This above all : to thine own self be true,  
 And it must follow, as the night the day,  
 Thou canst not then be false to any man."*

Hamlet had not only acted strangely in Ophelia's presence, he had written an extravagant letter to her which had been handed over to Polonius.

With this in hand the counsellor, big with importance, came to the King and Queen, certain that he could convince them that he held the right opinion as to the cause of the Prince's madness. The letter began :

"To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia." And went on :

*"Doubt thou the stars are fire ;  
 Doubt that the sun doth move ;  
 Doubt truth to be a liar ;  
 But never doubt I love.*

"O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers ; I have not art to reckon my groans : but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu. Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him. Hamlet."

This appeared to Polonius to be an absolute proof of madness, and he narrated the progress of the malady in Hamlet, that in being repulsed by the Lady Ophelia he

*"Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,  
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,  
Thence to a lightness, and by this declension  
Into the madness wherein now he raves  
And all we mourn for."*

But the King and Queen were not entirely convinced, so Polonius suggested as a proof that they should be the hidden witnesses of an interview of Hamlet with Ophelia. They knew that the Prince was accustomed to walk for hours in a lobby, and Polonius arranged that Ophelia should meet him, as it were, by chance.

Meanwhile, Hamlet, on his part, was not idle, and the arrival of a company of actors had suggested a plan which he felt convinced would take the King unawares and lay bare the secret of his guilty mind. The players were old acquaintances and would do much to serve the interests of the Prince. When he suggested the play called *The Murder of Gonzago*, they readily agreed to act it and to insert a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines written by Hamlet. The subject of the play was the murder of a Viennese duke and the remarriage of his wife, but Hamlet arranged that the murder should be by the pouring of poison into a sleeper's ear, as he took his siesta in a garden. Hamlet was yet uncertain how far the word of the ghost might be relied upon, and he desired to be assured of his ground. The spirit that he had seen might be but an evil spirit which had assumed his father's shape to compass the destruction of Hamlet's soul, so the Prince determined that the players should enact such a tragedy as that to which he understood his father had fallen a

victim before his uncle. If Claudius blenched and looked conscience-stricken, then the Prince would know what course to take. "The play's the thing," he muttered to himself, "wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King."

Polonius had now fetched his daughter, who was thus to be the innocent instrument of her father's craft. Together with the King he bestowed himself in a position where they might see and hear without detection, and soon Hamlet drew near. He was speaking to himself and brooding upon the thought of self-destruction.

*"To be, or not to be : that is the question :  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them. To die : to sleep ;  
No more ; and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep ;  
To sleep : perchance to dream : ay, there's the rub  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause : there's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life ;  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin ? Who would fardels bear,*

*To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn  
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pitch and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action."*

At this point he became aware of the presence of Ophelia, and possibly of the spies who were lurking in concealment. She bore in her hands the rich gifts and sweet remembrances which in happier days her lover had found joy in bestowing upon her. Ophelia treasured them still, but her father's worldly-wise warnings had taken root in her mind and she had grown to doubt Hamlet's sincerity. "Take these again," she said, proffering the tokens, "for to the noble mind rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind."

In Hamlet's frame of mind at the moment this was too much and he rained a torrent of bitter and scornful words upon the poor maiden, which to those who listened seemed ample confirmation of his madness, although the theory of Polonius as to its cause was little help.

The growing suspicions of the King that Hamlet's madness betokened ill to him received, indeed, fresh impetus, for a guilty conscience is ever quick to scent its accuser. He determined, therefore, that Hamlet should be got out of the way and decided to send

him to England to demand payment of neglected tribute due to Denmark.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Polonius, Ophelia, and the King had tried in vain to penetrate the screen of the Prince's antic disposition ; the Queen alone had not ventured to try the strength of her influence upon him. So Polonius suggested a crafty scheme which would enable him to get at the heart of the mystery. " Let his Queen-mother all alone entreat him to show his grief," he said ; " let her be round with him ; and I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear of all their conference."

Meanwhile the plan of Hamlet was being made ready. The Prince had arranged for the players to use the great hall of the castle as their theatre and had spent some time with them in the perfecting of their play, giving them wise hints on the best manner of speaking their lines. As the day drew to its close and the trumpets announced the coming of the King and Queen to the play, Hamlet called Horatio to him and said a few words to his friend. He loved Horatio and had an implicit trust in his faithfulness, for he was a man of steadfast mind and most scrupulous honour. A student and man of affairs, a scholar and a practical thinker, a poet and yet not a visionary, more like an antique Roman than a Dane, Horatio was a man of well-balanced mind, and a stalwart ally who never gave cause for a moment's doubt or anxiety. He was always ready to bear the burden of his friend's need, and would have laid down his life for him. He never obtruded his friendship nor spoke of his faithfulness, but Hamlet knew his constant mind and wore him as a jewel in his heart of hearts. At the end Horatio would have sacri-

ficed his life upon the body of the dying Prince, but Hamlet bade him live so that he might be the defender of his good name and the champion of his honour.

*"O good Horatio, what a wounded name  
Things standing thus unknown shall live behind me !  
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,  
To tell my story."*

Now before the play he took his friend aside and said :

*"There is a play to-night before the King ;  
One scene of it comes near the circumstance  
Which I have told thee of my father's death :  
I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,  
Even with the very comment of thy soul  
Observe my uncle : if his occulted guilt  
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,  
It is a damned ghost that we have seen,  
And my imaginations are as foul  
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note ;  
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,  
And after we will both our judgments join  
In censure of his seeming."*

Horatio gave his promise and at that moment the great doors of the hall were flung open and the brilliantly dressed courtiers, headed by the King and Queen, advanced to the sound of stirring music. It was a sight of magnificent richness, and with stately grace the procession swept up the hall and the lords and ladies took their places behind the royal pair. Hamlet greeted Ophelia and putting on his antic disposition threw

himself upon a rug before her, and opposite to the King, upon whom he riveted his gaze.

The first picture of the play presented a King and Queen who rest on a bank of flowers, the while they maintain a loving converse. The King presently falls asleep, the Queen watching by his side. She leaves him, and there enters a man who comes with stealthy footsteps and furtive looks to where the sleeper lies. He kisses the King's crown and then takes out a phial from which he pours a poison into the sleeper's ear. Noiselessly he steals away. The Queen returns and finds the King dead, with a passionate cry she flings herself upon the body and breaks out into lamentation. At the sound the poisoner returns, and after the body is carried away he proceeds to woo the Queen with gifts. For awhile she seems loath and unwilling, but in the end she accepts his love. All this was enacted in dumb show. At its close the players entered and made their speeches and so the play proceeded.

From the earliest moment Claudius showed signs of agitation and fear. His conscience was working, and terror laid a cold hand upon his heart. He moved restlessly in his seat and at length could bear the strain no longer. He leaped up and called for light, and moved in haste across the hall to hide himself from the burning eyes of Hamlet, which seemed to wither his very soul. In wild disorder the courtiers streamed after him, and Hamlet shouted out the words of a song :

*“ Why, let the stricken deer go weep,  
The hart ungalled play :  
For some must watch, while some must sleep :  
Thus runs the world away.”*

As the Prince and his guards crossed a plain on their way to take ship they encountered some soldiers in war array, marching towards Elsinore. At the head was young Fortinbras, intent upon braving Claudius in his own land and within his own stronghold. And so Hamlet the irresolute and Fortinbras the steadfast passed each other on the way.

And now we have to tell of deep sorrow as well as mourning in the castle of Elsinore, for the Lady Ophelia, in the double tragedy of her broken love and her father's untimely death had lost her reason, and she would wander through the corridors singing scraps of old songs and bewailing her father's fate. Laertes, her brother, on the way from Paris had heard the rumour that the King had killed Polonius, and gathering together a crowd of discontented Danes he came hot-foot to demand satisfaction from Claudius. With furious rage he broke in upon the King and Queen and it was only with extreme difficulty that Claudius induced him to moderate his wrath and hear the story of the tragedy as he desired it to be known. Laertes was still unconvinced when, to rouse anew his griefs, Ophelia carrying a handful of flowers came into the hall. She was a piteous sight, her sweet eyes beclouded with madness and her face pale with weeping. With the simplicity of a little child she handed a flower to each, and crooning a sad, wailing song she went her way to death, for the poor soul wandered away to a favourite stream where she had often played as a child, and there while gathering wild flowers her foot slipped and she fell into the water. For some time she floated, borne up by her garments, and as she drifted to her death she chanted snatches of old tunes. and then,

drawn down by the current, her life was extinguished and she passed away. Her end was like a strain of sad sweet music which comes floating to us on the wings of night and silence, and which we rather feel than hear, and so her gentle spirit fled upward to the Unseen.

They said that she had cast herself away in despair, and it was with maimed rites that they prepared to lay her in the grave. The sun was shining in the old churchyard where the gravediggers bent to their toil. One was an old man who had for more than thirty years been sexton, the other a clownish boy who served as his assistant. Great events may come and go, Kings and Queens rule and depart, and changes fall upon a nation, but the humble man lives his life and carries on his toil in the unbroken monotony of his calling. Busily plying their mattocks and spades the two gravediggers laboured at their task, and while they digged the old man sang :

*“ In youth, when I did love, did love,  
Methought it was very sweet,  
To contract, O, the time, for-a my behove,  
O, methought, there-a was nothing-a meet.  
But age, with his stealing steps,  
Hath claw'd me in his clutch,  
And hath shipped me intil the land,  
As if I had never been such.”*

Upon a mound not far from the grave two gentlemen were standing, engaged in serious converse. One was telling a story of great interest, about an adventure on the seas. Before his ship had been two days from port a pirate in a powerful vessel bore down upon them and came broadside on and tried to grapple. In the

confusion of the fighting which ensued the grappling-irons were flung off by the sailors of the King's ship and the vessels separated, but not before one agile fighter had leaped upon the deck of the pirate. He was made a prisoner but received good treatment, and soon was set ashore in Denmark, where he sent off letters to King Claudius and Horatio. The released prisoner was Hamlet, and quick upon the summons Horatio had joined his friend. The letter to the King read as follows :

"HIGH AND MIGHTY,

"You shall know I am set naked on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return.

"HAMLET."

In a postscript was the word "alone." As the two friends, Hamlet and Horatio, stood together in the old churchyard, for this was their place of meeting, they heard the sound of the gravedigger's song, and Hamlet said, "Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making." Horatio replied, "Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness," and Hamlet said, "'Tis e'en so; the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense."

As the man plied his spade a skull was thrown up and then another. Hamlet drew near and spoke to the gravedigger. He was a witty clown and said that the mad Hamlet had been sent to England because his madness would not be noticed there, for all the men in England were as mad as he.

The man went on to say that one of the skulls which he had unearthed was that of Yorick, the late King's jester. At this, Hamlet, deeply interested, took the skull in his hand and regarded it narrowly. "Alas, poor Yorick," he exclaimed, "I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now." The sound of an approaching procession broke in upon his musing. Looking up he beheld a funeral cortège, with the King and Queen and courtiers, pacing with slow steps across the churchyard. Following the bier was Laertes, and as the body was lowered into the grave, Hamlet heard him say, "A ministering angel shall my sister be."

Like an arrow the words sped to the heart of the Prince, for then he knew that the dead woman was his well-beloved Ophelia. "Sweets to the sweet," exclaimed the Queen as she scattered flowers, and Laertes carried away by his sorrow leaped into the grave to clasp his sister in his arms once more. Hamlet also leaped into the yawning tomb, and Laertes gripped him by the throat. They were soon torn apart, but Laertes swore to be avenged upon the Prince, whom he regarded as the destroyer of both father and sister.

That night Hamlet told Horatio the plot that the King had laid against his life, and how when he had discovered it on the ship he wrote out a new letter requesting the execution of the bearers; and Rosen-

erantz and Guildenstern, not knowing the consequences, were even now on their way to England and to their death.

But the King, foiled in one plot, had already contrived another. Laertes was to challenge Hamlet to a fencing bout with swords, and the King would prepare a poisoned chalice from which the Prince should be induced to drink in the heat of the contest. He called Laertes and with artful discourse, playing upon his vengeful passions, unfolded the scheme. The young man was ready and he vowed that he would anoint his foil with a poison so mortal that the merest prick would ensure speedy death.

A gaudy popinjay, Osric by name, bore the message to Hamlet, and on his acceptance the courtiers gathered in the great hall to watch the play, and the King and Queen were also in their places. The final scene was ready and Death was waiting to draw the closing curtains.

Before taking the foils Hamlet begged his opponent to forgive the deed which he had wrought in madness. They then set to, but Laertes, who knew that he had the deadly foil in his hand, hesitated to give the fatal touch. Suddenly the Queen stretched out her hand and drank from the poisoned goblet which had been placed near Hamlet. The King tried to stay her, but unwitting of the danger she took the draught. A few moments later, with a quick lunge, Laertes wounded Hamlet. The Prince rushed in upon him and in the scuffle the rapiers fell to the ground. Each quickly snatched a weapon again but in the confusion Hamlet caught up the poisoned foil and wounded Laertes with a deadly thrust. Then with a heavy groan, the Queen fell to the ground.

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"She swoonds to see them bleed," cried out the King.  
But the Queen exclaimed :

*"No, no, the drink, the drink,—O my dear Hamlet,—  
The drink, the drink : I am poison'd."*

And so she died. Laertes had also fallen heavily to the ground, and now with his last breath confessed the foul treachery of which he had been guilty :

*"Hamlet, thou art slain ;  
No medicine in the world can do thee good,  
In thee there is not half an hour of life ;  
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,  
Unbated and envenom'd : the foul practice  
Hath turn'd itself on me ; lo, here I lie,  
Never to rise again : thy mother's poison'd :  
I can no more : the King, the King's to blame."*

Hamlet with the envenomed rapier still in his hand here rushed upon the King and thrust it into him. Then he, too, staggered and fell upon the ground. As he did so the martial call of trumpets was heard outside and a heavy discharge of cannon shook the castle. Fortinbras and the English ambassadors with their soldiers were summoning the garrison to admit them.

But Horatio realised nothing save that his dearest friend was dying at his feet. He knelt beside him and lifted his head upon his knee. He said that he would die with him, but Hamlet besought him to live so that he might vindicate the good name of his friend. He grew weaker and his speech almost failed him but he strove hard, and said :

*"O, I die, Horatio,  
The potent poison quite o'er-crowns my spirit :  
I cannot live to hear the news from England ;  
But I do prophesy the election lights  
On Fortinbras : he has my dying voice ;  
So tell him, with the occurrents, more and less,  
Which have solicited. The rest is silence."*

He fell back and spoke no more. Horatio looked upon the dead face of his friend and in a broken voice exclaimed, as many men have said since, when they have read the sad story of the noble Prince Hamlet :

*"Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet  
prince ;  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest !"*

## As You Like It

**S**OMEWHERE in this fair world there is a beautiful forest called the Forest of Arden. It is a strange forest, with venomous snakes gliding in its coverts, and fierce lions hiding in its brakes; with shepherds tending their flocks and wild deer feeding in its leafy glades. It has its rocks and caves, and sometimes it is warm with tropical sunshine, and in the winter, cold and bleak with winds of icy fang and churlish chiding. It has its dark shelters and secluded hollows. Palm-trees grow side by side with ancient gnarled oaks, whose hoary tops proclaim a dim antiquity, and olive-trees flourish round the sheep-folds that cluster about the fringes of the wood. Pleasant streams laugh and ripple through the long avenues; now gliding softly over shining pebbles, again gathering into a deep smooth pool, whose surface mirrors the overhanging boughs, and in whose depths the speckled trout hangs poised on motionless fin, his sharp head pointing up the stream; now slipping past the shelving banks and over the ford where the animals cross and come down to drink of the refreshing water; now joining with another stream in the place where osiers grow, and breaking from the forest into the open country where lush green meadows and low mounds give rich pasture to the sheep and cattle.

Just there a whitewashed cottage stands, fringed about with olive-trees, and laden with the wealth of fragrant creeping plants; jasmine and honeysuckle freely give their sweetest scent, and lovely roses climb about the porch and peep into the shining diamond-leadèd panes. This beautiful cottage belongs to a crabbed, churlish farmer who grumbles and growls as he goes about his work, and appreciates his home so little that he sells it to a stranger who chances to pass that way.

The forest is very easy to find and wondrously pleasant to dwell in, but it is also a desert inaccessible whose melancholy boughs induce despair and sombre views of life. Yet down its long drives the forester's horn sounds cheerily, as it startles the timid deer, and round the cheery board of the camp-fire many a merry tale is told and bright song sung. A strange forest, but withal very beautiful, nowhere, yet everywhere, unknown, and yet within a day's march of many an English town.

Not far away there stands a lovely castle, the seat of a reigning Duke, with great gardens about it crammed with every description of beautiful shrub and flower. Within its walls richly dressed ladies and noble courtiers speed the happy hours away, and although disturbances and insurrections have led to the banishment of the rightful ruler, no one seems to mind it very much and the old Duke lives merrily in the forest with his two faithful lords, Amiens and Jaques, who have followed him into exile, while his usurping brother holds his kingdom and shelters his daughter.

Indeed the daughter of the banished Duke is the bosom friend of the daughter of the usurping brother, and the two grow together like roses upon one stalk.

## 108      Stories from Shakespeare

Each is equally beloved by Duke Frederick, who like the climate of the forest is a strange mixture of tropical heat and wintry cold. His courtiers take the changes of life as easily as they change their costumes. If it pleases them, they join in the serious business and the merry games of the court, and if it does not, they change their costumes and their allegiance, and slip away to join the banished Duke in the forest, where they fleet the time carelessly, as men did of old in the golden world.

Even Duke Frederick himself took the cares of State with easy grace, and when he found, as time went on, that his nobles were flocking to his banished brother, he raised an army, but a chance meeting with an old religious man converted him both from his enterprise and from the world, and he bequeathed crown and lands to his banished brother, and retired to a secluded cell within the forest. His conversion was so sudden that it would have astonished any one who did not know the peculiar atmosphere of the court and forest, but every one took it quite as a matter of course, although one shrewd courtier thought it was well to look into it, for as he said, "Out of these convertites there is much matter to be heard and learn'd."

The daughter of the banished Duke was named Rosalind, a beautiful, laughing girl who had all the qualities of a noble womanhood. She was tall and fair, but the graces of her mind were even greater than her outward form. She had all the courtesy and dignity of a high-born lady and won all hearts by her engaging charm. In disposition she was bright, joyous, and laughing, as sweet as the rose and as fresh as the dew. Her smile was like the sunshine of a bright May morn-

ing, and her laughter like the carolling of a lark. Withal she had a powerful intellect, a clear mental vision, a high sense of honour, a noble common sense, and a deep well of feeling. She revered the aged, and loved the common people. Running through her nature was a pensive, thoughtful melancholy, which, like the light cloud which sails across the summer sky, gave an added beauty to her character. Above all, she had the capacity for a deep and tender love, a love which once aroused many waters could not quench nor the floods drown; a love deep and unfathomed like the Bay of Portugal. Her cousin Celia was darker than she and not so tall, but like her in disposition, though framed in a smaller mould.

Before our story opens, the good knight, Sir Rowland de Boys, had died leaving three sons, Oliver, the eldest, Jaquès, and Orlando, the youngest. Oliver was a surly, greedy, unbrotherly man who envied those about him. Suspicious and moody, he was yet capable of better things. Orlando was a noble youth, of sturdy frame and undoubted courage. His father, Sir Rowland, had bequeathed to him, at his death, a thousand crowns, and had made the eldest son Oliver his guardian. Orlando considered that his education was being neglected, for he had been kept rustically at home and made to perform the menial offices of the farmyard, dining, or, as he called it, feeding with the hinds, and generally being looked down upon by his brother as a serf. One faithful man, the steward Adam, loved him and showed him respect, but he had to do it secretly, for Oliver had a sharp eye.

One day the brothers had a quarrel and Orlando, shaken beyond endurance by the taunts hurled upon

him, seized Oliver by the throat. Old Adam tried to separate them, and called on them, by the remembrance of their father, to be at accord, but Orlando held a firm grip until he had delivered his mind. He was a sturdy athlete, famed for his skill in all manly pursuits, and Oliver found himself within a grip of iron.

"You shall hear me," said Orlando. "My father charged you in his will to give me good education: you have trained me like a peasant, obscuring and hiding from me all gentleman-like qualities. The spirit of my father grows strong in me, and I will no longer endure it; therefore allow me such exercises as may become a gentleman, or give me the poor allottery my father left me by testament; with that I will go buy my fortunes." Oliver promised to give him some part of the bequest, not meaning to keep his word, and as Orlando went from him, followed by Adam, Oliver spurned them both and called the faithful old man "an old dog."

Oliver desired to be rid of them and had concocted a scheme to effect his purpose so far as Orlando was concerned. He was bitterly jealous of his brother, for he knew that he was a gentleman, despite all his disadvantages, learned, though never at school; full of noble device; of all sorts enchantingly beloved, and indeed so much in the heart of the world and especially of those about him who knew him best, that Oliver was altogether put into the shade. He determined to make an end of Orlando and for this purpose suggested to the famous wrestler, Charles, that in the event of his brother's acceptance of a general challenge given by the champion, the Duke's man should give him a severe fall, even to the breaking of

his neck. He suggested that Orlando was a stubborn and ambitious young fool, an envious emulator of every man's good parts, a secret and villainous contriver. "Thou wert best look to 't ;" he said impressively, "for if thou dost him any slight disgrace, or if he do not mightily grace himself on thee, he will practise against thee by poison, entrap thee by some treacherous device, and never leave thee till he hath ta'en thy life by some indirect means or other ; for, I assure thee, and almost with tears I speak it, there is not one so young and so villainous this day living."

The Duke's wrestler, good-humoured and burly, easily took the bait, and Oliver then sought his brother to kindle him towards the enterprise of a struggle. It was not a very difficult task, for Orlando was a skillful wrestler and not disinclined to try a fall with so well-known a champion.

The Duke's wrestler was in a dangerous mood on the day of the display. An old man brought his three stalwart sons, men of excellent growth and presence. The eldest entered the ring, Charles pounced upon him, and in a moment threw him and broke three of his ribs, so that there was little hope of life in him. So he served the second, and the third. The wounded men were drawn aside to a sheltered spot, where their aged father wept so piteously over them that the spectators were touched and wept in sympathy. Duke Frederick and his train had come in to view the sport, and his daughter Celia, and Rosalind, attended by the court jester, a witty soul named Touchstone, followed, because they had heard that an unknown young man was to try a fall with the redoubtable Charles. They had no wish to see so rough a sport and the Duke told

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Rosalind that they would find little in it to delight them because of the difference between the young man and the wrestler. This difference in physique was so marked that the Duke thought the match unfair and likely to be painful to witness. Orlando was called, and stood before Rosalind. In an instant each felt, in some mysterious way, bound up in the other. It was love at first sight, and Rosalind felt all her sympathy go out to this modest and chivalrous man.

Celia said that his spirit was too bold for his years and that he should be warned by what he had seen of the cruel proof of the wrestler's strength. Rosalind promised that if he desired they would beseech the Duke to have the wrestling stopped. There was sadness as well as confidence in the young man's reply :

"I beseech you, punish me not with your hard thoughts ; wherein I confess me much guilty, to deny so fair and excellent ladies anything. But let your fair eyes and gentle wishes go with me to my trial : wherein if I be foiled, there is but one shamed that was never gracious ; if killed, but one dead that is willing to be so ; I shall do my friends no wrong, for I have none to lament me ; the world no injury, for in it I have nothing : only in the world I fill up a place, which may be better supplied when I have made it empty."

Orlando was not dismayed by the size and skill of his opponent. He was no novice at the craft, and in the grips put forth a strength which disconcerted Charles. At length with a mighty effort he secured a firm hold, there was a twist, a strain, some agile movements, and the Duke's wrestler was flung violently to earth, breathless and unconscious.

The crowd was delighted and so were the Duke and his lords until he learned that the victor was the youngest son of his late enemy, Sir Rowland de Boys, the friend and comrade of the banished Duke. With still words he gave him his dismissal and Orlando would have fared badly had not Celia stepped forward and praised him, while Rosalind took a gold chain from her neck and asked him to wear it for her sake. And then she said some words which carried a tender significance within them. "Sir, you have wrestled well, and overthrown more than your enemies." Orlando felt himself to be overthrown by the bright eyes and gracious presence of the lady, and stood without a word, watching her until she passed within the doors of the palace.

A touch upon the shoulder aroused him and a friendly voice bade him make haste to leave the court. The Duke, this courtier said, was suspicious and tyrannical; it was safer, therefore, to be at a distance, out of the reach of his anger. News of the victory had also reached his brother Oliver, and in wild rage he vowed to burn Orlando's lodging to the ground when the tired youth was fast asleep within it. Had it not been for old Adam the plot would have succeeded. The steward met him in the road before he reached the house and begged him to flee. "This house is but a butchery," he said; "abhor it, fear it, do not enter it." But Orlando said that he was penniless, with nothing but his sword, and that he could not thieve and murder on the highway, or beg the charity of the well-disposed. And then Adam told him of a certain five hundred crowns he himself had saved during the long years of his service. He offered it to his young master and said :

*“ Take that, and He that doth the ravens feed,  
 Yea, providently caters for the sparrow,  
 Be comfort to my age ! Here is the gold ;  
 All this I give you. Let me be your servant :  
 Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty ,  
 For in my youth I never did apply  
 Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood,  
 Nor did not with unbashful forehead woo  
 The means of weakness and debility ;  
 Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,  
 Frosty, but kindly : let me go with you.”*

And so the twain turned away from the home of Oliver and set their faces towards the forest which lay upon the horizon.

But the wrath of Duke Frederick had to find vent, and it fell upon Rosalind, his niece, whom he accused of treachery. He knew that she was true as steel but he had noted that her patient silence and gentle submission had made his subjects pity her, and he feared that some day they would rally to her and help her to regain the crown snatched from the Duke her father. And so he called her traitor and bade her begone from his palace. But Celia was quick to defend the honour of her friend, and cried out :

*“ If she be a traitor,  
 Why so am I ; we still have slept together,  
 Rose at an instant, learn'd, play'd, eat together,  
 And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans,  
 Still we went coupled and inseparable.”*

But the Duke refused to listen to her pleadings and harshly told Rosalind that if within ten days she were

found within twenty miles of the court her life would be forfeited. Celia vowed that she would not leave her friend and suggested a flight to the forest where the banished Duke was. They must put themselves in mean attire, smirch their faces with a kind of umber, and go forth as two poor wayfarers. Their jewels and wealth could be hidden about them and thus in their banishment and rejection they would find love and liberty. She would call herself *Aliena*, and *Rosalind*, *Ganymede*, and no one would be likely to suspect that they were the daughters of noblemen.

Rosalind liked the plan and said that in her disguise she would put on a swashing and martial appearance, befitting the part of a bold forester. When she was equipped this was how she was attired: Her shining luxuriant hair was twisted up and hidden. She wore a short jacket or doublet, with trunk hose stuffed thickly about the waist with bombast or wool, thus concealing the natural outline of her figure. The hose was fastened to the doublet with silken tags called points. Loose boots of soft, tawny leather came almost to the thigh. She had a coarse cloak of russet green, and a black felt hat, narrow in the brim and high in the crown, thus concealing her hair. She had soft tawny gloves of leather, a belt of the same material with a short hunting cutlass, a huntsman's horn slung over her shoulder, and a sharp pointed boar-spear in her hand. Never did a more charming huntsman don the costume of the greenwood, nor one more ignorant of the woodman's craft. Celia must have looked upon her with glowing, admiring eyes.

But they were not destined to fare forth alone, for Touchstone, the merry jester of the court, vowed he

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would not leave them, and together, the ladies and the fool, they slipped quietly from the palace in the hours of darkness, and before the sun rose were almost within the shelter of the forest.

Touchstone was a jester who wore the motley garb and cap of the court fool. This official was one who was expected to keep the fire of wit burning brightly and to entertain the court with a flow of witless nonsense or clever repartee, sometimes to give utterance to thoughts full of philosophy, and to season every discussion with the salt of cleverness and brighten every situation with a flash of brilliant humour. Failing all these he was at least expected by his prattling and careless impudence or bodily eccentricities to make the onlookers feel that there is usually another side to every question. Touchstone was only a fool by name. In himself he was a genius of high order, a quick reader of character, who used folly as a stalking-horse and from under it shot the keen shafts of his wit. He had a wonderful skill in picking out the weakness of every character, nothing could be concealed so cleverly but that it would be detected by his quick eye, and he could touch the most carefully hidden defect. He said everything with a smiling lip and an airy grace, but he dropped the acid with the skill of the most accomplished critic, until the sufferer hardly knew whether to laugh or cry. He was tender-hearted withal, and a most attached follower, accepting banishment cheerfully for Celia's sake, although he never spared her with his wit.

Of all the fools, Touchstone is the most joyous, the most philosophical, and the cleverest. He was at his best when he held courts and courtiers up to ridicule

and was laughing at the pretentious folly of the gaily dressed members of the ducal court. He was clever in his ridicule of love. "I remember," said he, "when I was in love, I broke my sword upon a stone and bid him take that, for coming a-night to Jane Smile, and I remember the kissing of her batlet" (a little wooden bat that washerwomen used to beat out dirty clothes) "and the cow's dugs that her pretty chapt hands had milked; and I remember the wooing of a peascod instead of her; from whom I took two cods and, giving her them again, said with weeping tears, 'wear these for my sake.' We that are true lovers run into strange capers; but as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature in love mortal in folly."

The way seemed long and very toilsome to the gently nurtured ladies; Touchstone, also unused to fatigue, began to be very wearied, and Celia said that she could go not one step farther. They were now on the borders of the forest and the morning sun was shining. Rosalind exclaimed with a sigh, "O Jupiter, how weary are my spirits!" to which Touchstone replied, "I care not for my spirits, if my legs were not weary." They plodded on, however, until at length Rosalind said in more joyous tones, "Well, this is the Forest of Arden," and Touchstone capped her satisfaction by saying in a dry tone, "Ay, now I am in Arden"; he looked round in a tired way and continued, "the more fool I; when I was at home, I was in a better place; but travellers must be content."

And yet there was much to cheer them; they were free from the anxieties of a doubtful position, from State trammels and conventionalities, from the difficulties of the unsettled court and the artificial empti-

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ness which lay beneath the rich dress and the courtly ceremony, and they had come into the open air, where the cool breezes blew upon heated foreheads and the sweet silence of the forest reigned, where the sunlight was tempered by green leaves and streams ran babbling and murmuring over the stones. They looked down the rustling aisle of stately trees and upon bracken-strewn coverts and leafy dells where the dappled deer lay, and to grassy knolls where the sheep clustered. They were in the open air and all around them was the romantic and strange Forest of Arden.

As they rested in a beautiful glade, they saw two figures slowly making towards them. An old man and a young one, dressed as shepherds, in plain, rough, homely garments. They were in earnest converse and looked as solemn as though they were engaged in some business of the State. The young man, whose name was Silvius, was lamenting the fact that his sweetheart did not return his love, and the old shepherd, Corin, was evidently trying to cheer him. He said that he had forgotten more than a thousand fancies that disturbed him in the days of his own youth, and seemed to infer that it did not matter very much how far forgetfulness clouded the memory of youthful love. But Silvius thought that he was hard and unfeeling. They sat together at the base of a great tree and in an offended tone he said :

*“ O, thou didst then ne’er love so heartily !  
If thou remember’st not the slightest folly  
That ever love did make thee run into,  
Thou hast not loved :  
Or if thou hast not sat as I do now,  
Wearing thy hearer in thy mistress’ praise*

*Thou hast not loved :  
Or if thou hast not broke from company  
Abruptly, as my passion now makes me,  
Thou hast not loved."*

He leaped to his feet and turned away from Corin, and as he wandered down the glade they heard him cry in distressful accents, "O Phebe, Phebe, Phebe." Touchstone chuckled with delight, but Rosalind seemed to find the explanation of her own weariness of spirit, for she said :

*"Alas, poor shepherd ! searching of thy wound,  
I have by hard adventure found mine own."*

Corin, the old shepherd, was a very plain and simple-minded rustic, humble yet happy, hardworking yet content, poor yet dignified. A natural philosopher who summed up his position in life in a few words of simple dignity. "Sir, I am a true labourer : I earn that I eat, get that I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness, glad of other men's good, content with my harm, and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck."

To Rosalind and Celia, used to the atmosphere of the court, he was like a breath of sweet forest air, and although Touchstone delighted to make him the target of his wit he yet recognised that the plain old man presented a fine ideal of a quiet and simple life. From Corin they learned that Silvius would have bought the flock and pasture of the churlish farmer whose white-washed cottage could be seen on the upland at the edge of the forest, but that love had so unsettled him that he thought of nothing but Phebe. Rosalind decided to buy both cottage and flock, and installed

Corin as her shepherd, and so the wanderers entered into possession of the little farm and prepared to enjoy the freedom of the field and forest. Rosalind was now but a few miles from where her father and his lords had found shelter in the woods, and soon in the course of their wanderings the members of the different parties met. The wit and philosopher of the Duke's companions was a nobleman named Jaques, a well-travelled courtier who knew the world and always had a keen eye for every little thing. He was a quick observer, very apt in speech, able to express his thought in choice diction and poetical figure. He was sentimental, somewhat inclined to be self-indulgent, and prided himself on his melancholy, which, he said, was cultivated. "A melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects ; and indeed, the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness." He said that he loved melancholy better than laughing and that his kind of melancholy was unique, not the scholar's, which is emulation ; nor the musician's, which is fantastical ; nor the courtier's, which is proud ; nor the soldier's, which is ambitious ; nor the lawyer's, which is politic ; nor the lady's, which is nice ; nor the lover's, which is all these. He was a man of sentiment and liked to turn the realities of life into a homily or a jest. He was fond of solitary walks through the forest, and often left his companions because he said that he was tired of their prattle.

On this fine day he had left the Duke and had cast himself down under an oak whose gnarled roots peeped out upon the brook. Suddenly the thickets on the

other side were torn apart and a poor wounded stag came limping to the stream. His flanks were heaving with exertion, his breath came in quick pants, and his eyes seemed filled with tears. He stood in the shallows, and as he tried to drink his tears fell into the stream. Jaques watched and moralised :

*" Poor dear, thou makest a testament  
As worldlings do, giving thy sum of more  
To that which had too much."*

There was another rush in the coverts and presently a herd of deer, unwounded and full of pasture, swept past the stricken animal and were lost in the woods :

*" Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens ;  
'Tis just the fashion : wherefore do you look  
Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there ?"*

➤ And so Jaques wept and commented upon the sobbing deer. Not very far away the banished Duke was talking with Amiens, a light-hearted, song-loving lord, and other courtiers. They were all dressed like foresters and were engaged in the chase. The Duke had borne the stubbornness of his fortune in a sweet and quiet style, and thus he greeted his companions :

➤ *" Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,  
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet  
Than that of painted pomp ? Are not these woods  
More free from peril than the envious court ?  
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,  
The seasons' difference ; as the icy fang  
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,  
Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,  
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say,*

*'This is no flattery : these are counsellors  
That feelingly persuade me what I am.'  
Sweet are the uses of adversity ;  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head :  
And this our life exempt from public haunt  
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones and good in everything.'*

At length the courtly foresters came to a lovely glade where the leaves lay like a golden carpet on the ground. A fire was made, venison was prepared, and the merry companions gathered around to share the feast. Amiens burst out into song and the chorus rang through the glade :

*"Under the greenwood tree  
Who loves to lie with me,  
And turn his merry note  
Unto the sweet bird's throat,  
Come hither, come hither, come hither :  
Here shall he see  
No enemy  
But winter and rough weather."*

Later they heard a sound of laughter, as the melancholy Jaques came through the wood. He was laughing in uncontrollable merriment and made the woods re-echo with his glee. He had just left Touchstone, whom he had encountered in the forest, and the two wits had had a battle of words. Touchstone had thrown himself down on a couch of leaves, where the sunlight streamed upon him, and there he was basking and at the same time railing at Fortune. "Good morrow, fool,"

said Jaques, as he came up. "Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune," was the reply, and then Touchstone with a stupid look upon his face, but with a gleam of malice in his eye, for he had read the character of Jaques as easily as one reads a printed page, took out a watch and looked steadfastly at the dial.

After a long silence he lifted his eyes and said in sententious tones:

*"It is ten o'clock,*

*Thus may we see how the world wags :*

*'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine ;*

*And after one hour more 'twill be eleven ;*

*And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,*

*And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot ;*

*And thereby hangs a tale."*

This was so much like the vein of the moralising Jaques that the aptness went home, and Jaques burst out laughing and kept it up, as he said, for an hour without intermission, and as he turned away, he said, "O noble fool! A worthy fool! Motley's the only wear." He felt that he had met his match in Touchstone.

He took his place among the feasters, and was about to eat when there occurred a startling interruption. A young man with a drawn sword in his hand pushed his way among them and cried out: "Forbear and eat no more." When the Duke spoke kindly to him he blushed and put up his sword. He was invited to sit down and enjoy the feast with them, and the gentle words of the Duke made him ashamed of his violence. It was Orlando, who, leaving old Adam, tired and faint with hunger, had pushed on to demand food from the foresters and was prepared to take it by force.

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if necessary. When he heard the kindly welcome he said that he must return for his old companion, who, oppressed with the two weak evils, age and hunger, had limped in pure love after him for so many weary miles. As he turned away, the Duke said to his companions :

*“Thou seest we are not all alone unhappy :  
This wide and universal theatre  
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene  
Wherein we play in.”*

Jaques forgot his hunger in the opportunity now given him to moralise. Looking round, he said :

*“All the world’s a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players :  
They have their exits and their entrances ;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms.  
Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress’ eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon’s mouth. And then the just  
In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances ;  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slipper’d pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,*

*His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank ; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."*

This moralising of the forest philosopher had a solemnising effect, and the Duke broke the silence which followed with the request for a song. Amiens hastened to cheer him, and all the rest joined in the chorus :

*"Blow, blow, thou winter wind,  
Thou art not so unkind  
As man's ingratitude ;  
Thy tooth is not so keen,  
Because thou art not seen,  
Although thy breath be rude.*

*Heigh-ho ! sing, heigh-ho ! unto the green holly :  
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere jolly :  
Then, heigh-ho, the holly !  
This life is most jolly.*

*"Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,  
That dost not bite so nigh  
As benefits forgot :  
Though thou the waters warp,  
Thy sting is not so sharp  
As friend remember'd not.*

*Heigh-ho ! sing, heigh-ho ! unto the green holly :  
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere jolly :  
Then, heigh-ho, the holly !  
This life is most jolly."*

When the song came to an end, Orlando whispered his identity to the leader and received a hearty welcome as the son of good Sir Rowland, and he was told that the foresters were lords and their leader the banished Duke himself. And so he joined their company, but he could not forget the fair lady he had seen at the court, and her name was always in his thoughts. He had no idea that she was so near, for in his imagination he saw her every day as he saw her that day of the wrestling. He began to write scraps of verse and as he wandered in the forest he stuck them on the trees. Rosalind and Celia came across them in the course of their walks, and the name "Rosalind" naturally aroused their interest. Rosalind read one of these letters of the unknown, couched in these words :

*"From the East to Western Ind,  
No jewel is like Rosalind.  
Her worth, being mounted on the wind,  
Through all the world bears Rosalind.  
All the pictures fairest lined  
Are but black to Rosalind.  
Let no face be kept in mind  
But the fair of Rosalind."*

Touchstone laughed at the verses and said that he could rhyme like that for eight years together, and called it butterwomen's poetry. Celia had found a longer message which ended in this way :

*"Therefore Heaven Nature charged  
That one body should be fill'd  
With all graces wide-enlarged :  
Nature presently distill'd  
Helen's cheek, but not her heart,*

*Cleopatra's majesty,  
Atalanta's better part,  
Sad Lucretia's modesty.  
Thus Rosalind of many parts  
By heavenly synod was devised ;  
Of many faces, eyes and hearts,  
To have the touches dearest prized.  
Heaven would that she these gifts should have,  
And I to live and die her slave."*

But Celia had discovered more than the poetry ; she had come upon a handsome young forester carving "Rosalind" in the bark of a tree, and by the gold chain he wore about his neck she knew him to be Orlando, the young wrestler.

When she told all this to her cousin she put Rosalind in a fine state of agitation. The secret of her heart was manifest by her questions, "Alas, the day," said she, "what shall I do with my doublet and hose ? What did he when thou sawest him ? What said he ? How looked he ? Wherein went he ? What makes he here ? Did he ask for me ? Where remains he ? How parted he with thee ? and when shalt thou see him again ? Answer me in one word."

Hardly had the answer been given when Orlando and Jaques came into sight. They were snapping at each other with sharp words, for Jaques had got a little tired of the young man whom he dubbed good Signior Love. Without perceiving Rosalind and Celia, good Monsieur Melancholy, as Orlando called him, turned down the long aisle of trees and into a covert. Rosalind pretended to be a smart lackey and asked Orlando what o'clock it was. She was dressed in the garb of a forester, but Orlando let her see that a

woodman would not have put the question in that form: "You should ask me what time o' day," he said, "there's no clock in the forest."

One word led to others and in the conversation which followed Rosalind expressed the wish that she could meet a man that abused the young plants with carving "Rosalind" on their barks, and hanged odes upon hawthorns and elegies on brambles; all, forsooth, deifying the name. Orlando confessed that he was the culprit but said in excuse that he was very much in love. Rosalind laughed at this and said that he was mistaken, for he lacked the signs of love, which were: a lean cheek; a blue eye and sunken; an unquestionable spirit; a beard neglected; ungartered hose; unbanded bonnet; unbuttoned sleeve; shoes untied, and everything demonstrating a careless desolation. She did not believe he loved any one but himself and said that if he came every day to her cottage and called her Rosalind, and made love to her, he would soon discover that he was cured of his love for the unknown Rosalind.

Orlando agreed to this strange compact, and later on went through a farcical marriage service, with Celia as the priest, and the young forester he called Rosalind as bride. But Love was troubling the forest in other directions, for Touchstone had fallen in love with a lumpish servant wench called Audrey, the quick-witted man choosing the most rustic of all the country-side. She was heavy, slow-witted, stolid, and clumsy, with an ugly face and careless manner. "A poor virgin, sir," said Touchstone, "an ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own." It was a most curious instance of love at first sight, and showed that mating often goes by contrary.

Phebe, too, beloved of Silvius, had fallen desperately in love with Rosalind, thinking that she was what she seemed, a handsome young forester. Rosalind treated her with scant courtesy, but that only served to increase her affection, and poor Silvius said that if Phebe would only be gracious now and again and allow him to glean the broken ears after the man who reaped the main harvest, he would be content, and would be happy if sometimes she loosed a scattered smile upon him. Jaques was also attracted by Rosalind, whom he knew as Ganymede, but she turned him aside with a jest. To add to the complexities, the wicked brother Oliver came to seek Orlando in the forest and there a strange adventure befell him. Wearied with his journey Oliver had sought the shade of a friendly oak-tree and soon fell asleep. A venomous green snake glided around the neck of the sleeping man, and under the bushes there crouched a lean and hungry lioness watching for the most favourable moment for a spring. But all unsuspecting the terrible danger, Oliver lay. Orlando by chance drew near; the snake perceiving him, slipped away and glided into a bush, but the lioness kept her watch. Twice Orlando turned his back and purposed to leave the sleeper to the hungry beast, but kindness, nobler ever than revenge, overcame the unworthy thought, and drawing his sword he defended his brother and slew the animal, but not before it had torn his shoulder with one fierce blow of its paw. He fainted, but when he recovered he begged his brother to take the handkerchief, red with his blood, to the shepherd youth that he in his sport did call his Rosalind, as an explanation why Orlando had not met him

at the cottage. Rosalind fainted when she heard the tidings, and Oliver, left alone with Celia, or Aliena, as she called herself, promptly fell in love with her and determined to marry her, repenting of all his evil deeds and vowing that when they were married he would relinquish his estate and honours to the brother he had injured, and live and die a shepherd in Arden. Again love at first sight had settled a number of difficult questions. Touchstone had made up his mind to be married to Audrey, by Sir Oliver Martext, the priest, but before he could do so he had to scare away a rustic lover of hers, William, a lout of twenty-five, born and bred in the forest. Touchstone frightened him with threatening words and William, glad to get away, touched his forehead and said, "God rest you merry, sir," and off he went.

Rosalind went to where she knew she would find Orlando; he carried his arm in a sling. She said she thought that it was his heart that was wounded and he said it was, by the eyes of a lady he always wished for, Rosalind. She said that she was a kind of magician, and had been clever in certain arts since she was three years old; if he desired it she promised that she would be able to produce the lady he loved by the time of the wedding to-morrow, and that if Orlando still wished it, the same Rosalind would be glad to be his wife.

Just then Silvius and Phebe came in. Silvius wanted to marry Phebe, and Phebe said that she would marry only Ganymede. Rosalind promised that if she married any woman she would marry Phebe. "Meet me to-morrow," said Ganymede, "and I will marry you." To Orlando: "I will satisfy you, if ever I satisfied man, and you shall be married to-morrow." And

to Silvius she said : " You shall be married to-morrow." On the morrow there was a great gathering in the forest. The Duke, Amiens, Jaques and all the lords were there and the glades began to look like a court. It was a glorious day of brilliant sunshine. Two light-hearted pages were trolling out a song :

*" It was a lover and his lass,  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,  
That o'er the green cornfield did pass  
In the springtime, the only pretty ring time,  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding :  
Sweet lovers love the spring."*

Touchstone came along with Audrey and soon Rosalind, Silvius, and Phebe drew near the Duke.

" You say," said Rosalind, " if I bring in your Rosalind you will bestow her on Orlando here ? "

" That would I," said her father, " had I kingdoms to give with her."

" And you," turning to Orlando, " you will have her, if I bring her."

" That would I," said he, " were I of all kingdoms king."

" And you," turning to Phebe, " if you do refuse to marry me, you'll give yourself to this most faithful shepherd."

" So is the bargain," replied the infatuated maid. At this Rosalind and Celia retired, but presently returned, no longer dressed as foresters, but in the rich garb of ladies of the court. There was a cry of delight and astonishment, and then Orlando knew, and he must have been a simpleton not to have guessed it before, that the handsome forester with the swashing, martial

air, was none other than the idol of his heart, the Lady Rosalind. Every one was made perfectly happy and the forest rang with song and music.

*“ This carol they began that hour,  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,  
How that a life was but a flower  
In springtime, the only pretty ring time.  
And therefore take the present time  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino ;  
For love is crowned with the prime  
In springtime, the only pretty ring time,  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding :  
Sweet lovers love the spring.”*

The banished Duke returned once more to his palace and the duties of his office, rewarding those faithful servants who had endured shrewd days and nights with him, when the sky was their only roof and the forest their home ; and Orlando and Rosalind, Oliver and Celia, Touchstone and Audrey, Silvius and Phebe, in their great happiness realised the truth expressed by one of our great writers, Marlowe, and placed by Shakespeare on the lips of Phebe :

*“ Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,  
‘ Who ever loved that loved not at first sight ’ ? ”*

## Machbeth

**T**HE great story of Machbeth is an illustration of the powers of imagination and conscience, working in a sensitive and highly-strung mind. Its scene is laid among men of Keltic race and on the soil of Scotland. To feel the power of the story you must know its setting.

Scotland is girded on the east by the North Sea, and on the west the great Atlantic makes its cavernous re-echo with the solemn music of its roll. Away beyond the Galloway Highlands, with their memories of border foray and strife, their silvery rivers and romantic ruins, and the smiling Lothians with their stately castles, there lies the land of Gaelic romance and story, of dark loch and sombre mountain, of purple heather and sturdy pine, of winter storm and sweeping tempest ; the land whose stories are of wild clansmen, of bitter feuds and dark revenges, of fierce fight and sombre passionate hate, of fervent and unswerving loyalty. Among the wild and windswept mountains of Caledonia, the Keltic nature developed some of its most striking qualities ; a softness and a tenderness which the nestling lochs have fostered ; a dreaminess which the brooding quiet of the sleeping sea and the leaping of the waterfalls have tutored ; a sternness and power of endurance

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which the lonely moor and raging storm have begotten ; a superstition which many dark scenes and strange events have implanted and developed. Above all there is the spirit of the fighting man whose natural hardihood has been cast in that rough mould which makes the clang of arms the sweetest of music and returns the fierce blow and angry word as surely as the thunder-growl is heard when the forked lightning leaps athwart the sky.

Duncan, King of Scotland, had ruled a turbulent people for many years with the strong hand of a masterful spirit. Increasing age, however, had made him disinclined for the privations and struggles of the camp and field. When a rebellion broke out among certain clans, aided by soldiers sent by his enemy, the King of Norway, Duncan sent two of his ablest chieftains, Macbeth and Banquo, to lead his armies to victory. Banquo was a brave soldier and courteous gentleman, and he had one son, a boy named Fleance. Macbeth was a chieftain who lived in his castle at Inverness, with Lady Macbeth, his wife ; he was a valiant soldier beloved by his men and trusted by his King. The rival armies met in a great battle in Fife, and Sweno, King of Norway, Macdonald of the Western Isles, and the Thane of Cawdor were defeated and scattered.

In a camp at Forres, King Duncan and his sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, and many of his noblemen, awaited the news with anxious hearts. Suddenly a commotion arose in the camp, a loud cry was heard and cheering, and amid a crowd of soldiers a wounded sergeant, faint with loss of blood, and almost spent, staggered towards the King. He bore the tidings of victory and, above all, recounted with a soldier's joy

the mighty deeds of the brave Macbeth. Hardly had he told his story when he reeled and fainted. There was another cry of welcome, and the Thanes of Ross and Angus came spurring through the crowd and alighted before the King with confirmation of the tidings borne by the sergeant. Duncan was overjoyed and straightway gave orders that the traitorous Thane of Cawdor should be executed and his title conferred upon Macbeth. Ross and Angus were commanded to return to Macbeth so that at the earliest moment he might receive the commendations of his King.

It was a stormy evening, heavy banks of cloud rolled up from the sea and spread themselves like a black pall across the sky. Soon the lightning leaped forth and the thunder followed with deafening clamour. The rain swept in wild gusts, and beat upon a wide and blasted heath. Three strange figures, shaped like women, withered and wild in their attire, ugly, skinny, and bearded, appeared and vanished in the darkness.

In a wild part where gloomy rocks stood out, two men with sodden garments and wildly streaming plaids were forcing their way through the storm. One muttered: "So foul and fair a day I have not seen." The other plodded doggedly on, wondering how far they had still to travel to Forres. The strange, weird figures of the three witches stood out clearly in the momentary glare of a lightning flash, and Banquo, perceiving them, leaped back in alarm. Macbeth, sunk in his own dark thoughts, had not perceived them, but Banquo's sudden exclamation aroused him:

*"What are these*

*So wither'd, and so wild in their attire,*

*That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,*

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*And yet are on 't? Live you? or are you aught  
That man may question? You seem to understand me,  
By each at once her choppy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so."*

Macbeth, resolute and stern, pushed himself in front of his comrade and commanded the witches to speak. His words were few but they rang out like a trumpet blast. "Speak, if you can: what are you?" The thunder rattled and the lightning gleamed through the darkness and from the gloom where the weird sisters stood there came strange greeting. They hailed Macbeth as Thane of Glamis, and Thane of Cawdor, and then in tones which shook Macbeth to the very soul, they screamed, "All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be King hereafter." The event thus prophesied was a very unlikely one, for Duncan was strong, and his two sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, were men in the full vigour of their young manhood. Macbeth was a kinsman of the King and in the royal line, but it was a vaulting ambition, indeed, which would cause him to lift up his eyes to the crown of Scotland. And yet, deep in his heart, this ambition lay coiled like a venomous serpent. He had dreamed oftentimes of the kingly office and saw his own strong hands tearing down Duncan and the royal house. He looked across a dark chasm of evil deeds and saw himself mounting the throne on the other side. The words of the witches had summed up the secret thoughts which had been cherished in his own soul and he started in fear even though the promises seemed so fair. He forgot the witches, the storm, the blasted heath, as he looked upon the picture conjured

up by their words, and was rapt in thought until the voices sounded once again, this time addressed to Banquo. The witches hailed him as lesser than Macbeth, yet greater; not so happy, yet much happier; not a king, yet the father of kings.

This last prophecy aroused Macbeth from his reverie and he fixed a gloomy look upon the face of his comrade. Then slowly, but with an undertone of menace he said, "Your children shall be kings," and in his heart of hearts he determined that Banquo and his son Fleance should never bar his way to the throne. The witches had vanished into thin air, and while Macbeth and Banquo marvelled at the strange encounter they heard the clatter of horses' feet and saw Angus and Ross riding hard in their direction. They drew rein when they beheld Macbeth and Banquo and told their news. The King had made Macbeth Thane of Cawdor, and thus one of the unlikely things in the strange prediction of the witches had come true.

"Glamis, and Thane of Cawdor," muttered Macbeth. "The greatest is behind," and before his mind there arose a horrible picture which made his heart beat furiously and his hair stand upon end—a picture of treachery and murder. He saw himself striking at Duncan and his sons, and the serpent in his heart arose in full strength and Macbeth knew what it was and what it meant. His companions noticed his strange agitation and wondered, but with an effort Macbeth recovered himself, saying softly, beneath his breath:

*"If chance will have me king, why, chance may*

*Crown me, without my stir.*

*Come what come may,*

*Time and the hour runs through the roughest day."*

They pursued their journey, the storm cleared off, and under the bright light of the stars they came to Forres, where the King and his courtiers greeted them with many acclaims. Macbeth was commended for his bravery and faithfulness, and the King promised to give him greater honours as the time went by. "I have begun to plant thee," he said, "and will labour to make thee full of growing," and then he announced to his assembled thanes and kinsmen that he was about to establish his kingdom upon his eldest son, Malcolm, upon whom he now bestowed the title of Prince of Cumberland, and that he meant to honour his loyal soldier, Macbeth, with an immediate royal visit to the castle of Inverness. Macbeth was wearied with his labours in the battle and the toilsome journey he had undergone, but he felt that he must hurry away to prepare his wife for the coming of the King. His mind was in a tumult of conflicting desires and his sinful thoughts were turning ever to bloody and treacherous deeds. He felt that he must get away into the darkness again, away from the light of the palace and from the light of the stars, for the blackness of his soul craved solitude and gloom. All through the night he rode and on the morrow the sun shone fair and brilliantly upon the turrets of his great castle of Inverness. Upon the battlements, Lady Macbeth paced to and fro, reading a letter which she had received from her husband. She was the partner of his hidden desires and knew what lay in his heart. This is how the letter ran :

"They met me in the day of success ; and I have learned by the perfectest report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into

which they vanished. While I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the King, who all-hailed me 'Thane of Cawdor'; by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of time, with 'Hail, King that shalt be!' This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell."

Lady Macbeth, to all appearance, was a faithful and good wife to a loyal and chivalrous soldier, and an attached subject to her King and kinsman. She loved her husband and was proud of his achievements. In personal intercourse with others she was dignified, courteous, and friendly: a woman of quick imagination and powerful intellect, ready in argument and full of insight. Womanly and delicate in her disgust of unlovely things, she sometimes exaggerated the vigour of her language, when under the stress of great excitement, but she was delicate and refined in her shrinking from sights of coarseness and blood. Such things seemed to work into the very fibre of her being. The memory of her white-haired father was a sacred thing to her. Temptation to evil filled her with superhuman courage and resource, but the evil deed, when done, appalled and crushed her in the strong agonies of terror and remorse. When conscience was awakened to full vigour, her restless spirit knew no repose and sleep became a terror. She little thought as she viewed the awful act of disloyal treachery from a distance, how terrible that action was in its completion, and as she pondered over her husband's letter she meditated, with a woman's ingenuity, how she could gain the end

she desired. A messenger burst in upon her with the news that her husband was not far behind him, and that King Duncan was coming to pay a visit to the castle of Inverness. At once her quick mind saw the opportunity which the coming of Duncan placed within her reach. It was a wondrous chance and to arouse in her the necessary courage she cried on the evil spirits to unsex her and to fill her from head to foot with direst cruelty, so that no compunctious visitings of nature should shake her fell purpose :

“ Come thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
To cry, ‘ Hold, hold ! ’ ”

At that instant her husband hurried into her presence with the fateful news of the coming of the King. “ He comes here to-night,” he said, “ and purposes to leave to-morrow.” His wife looked him in the face and her words dropped like fire into his brain :

“ O, never  
Shall sun that morrow see !  
Your face, my thane, is as a book where men  
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,  
Look like the time ; bear welcome in your eye,  
Your hand, your tongue : look like the innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under ’t. He that’s coming  
Must be provided for : and you shall put  
This night’s great business into my despatch ;  
Which shall to all our nights and days to come  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.”

Slowly the long day waned and as the evening sun lighted up the towers and pinnacles of the old castle the sound of trumpets was heard and the fluttering pennons and shining spear-points of the King's guards could be seen approaching. The castle was in a beautiful situation, and a soft and gentle air seemed to promise health and invite to safe repose. Swallows were flying about and their clay nests could be discerned upon the frieze and buttresses of the outer walls. No owl hooted, no chill wind stirred among the trees, nothing spoke of treachery, fear, and death. Gloom lurked within the dark recesses of the ancient stronghold and torches gleamed here and there within the obscurity, but outside the gentle glow of sunset was over all and King Duncan was filled with a feeling of security and peace.

"This castle hath a pleasant seat," he said to Banquo, who rode beside him. "The air nimbly and sweetly recommends itself unto our gentle senses."

As they entered the castle, Lady Macbeth met them and there was an interchange of charming courtesy. The old King greeted her with all the gentleness and chivalrous devotion of a worthy knight, and thus the unsuspecting Duncan passed within the portals, and the sunlight saw him no more. A great banquet had been prepared but Macbeth was ill at ease. His murderous thoughts were fast coming to the point of decision, although he yet lacked the resolution to proceed to the execution of his purpose. He was not blind to the terrible treachery of his course and his nature shrank from so foul a deed. Duncan was his King and kinsman, his unsuspecting guest and one whose virtues were so great and kindness so pronounced that everything about him raised a strong plea against his murder.

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Nothing in him had incensed Macbeth against him, there was no reason for the crime save wild ambition on the part of the thane. Every voice would rise in protest against such a deed, and the honours which had been showered upon Macbeth would be swept away in the flowing tide of a nation's indignation. A light step was heard and Lady Macbeth appeared to chide her husband for his imaginative fears. She brushed his reasons aside with a contemptuous hand, and laughed at his dread of detection. It could not be found out, she said, for she would make the chamberlains who slept beside the King heavy with wine and wassail, so that in swinish sleep they would neglect the guard they ought to keep over Duncan's person. Nay more, it would be easy to put the guilt upon them, by marking them with blood and plunging their daggers into the King. Who then would suspect Macbeth, or suspecting, dare to lay the blame upon him? Resolution was all that was required, and so she fanned the spark of Macbeth's ambition and evil thoughts, until it grew into a mighty flame.

Midnight had long sounded from the great bell of the castle and a dark and starless night had succeeded the sunny day. A torch gleamed fitfully in the courtyard as Banquo and Fleance were crossing to their chambers. Banquo was ill at ease, for a heavy foreboding of evil weighed like lead upon his soul. He called out for his sword when he saw Macbeth emerge from the gloom. Banquo gave the thane a diamond which the kindly King had sent as a present to Lady Macbeth. With good wishes for undisturbed repose the chieftains separated, but Macbeth with moody steps continued to pace the dark courtyard.

The night grew blacker. It was the time when the one half of nature seems dead, leaving to wolves, evil spirits, witches, thieves, and murderers the darkness wherein to carry out their evil deeds. An owl shrieked, and from the stables came the sound of trampling horses, as though some wild alarm had terrified them. The wind arose and shrieked around the lofty battlements, and great trees swung their branches and creaked and groaned.

Within the castle yard, Macbeth was staring with wide-open, terrified eyes at a mystic dagger which seemed to float before him. He tried to clutch it, but it eluded his grasp, great spots of blood were on the blade and handle. It seemed to point the way to the chamber where Duncan and his two officers lay. A bell was rung, and the vision faded. Lady Macbeth entered and saw her husband creeping like an assassin towards the King's sleeping-place. He glided around the wall, dagger in hand, and was lost to view. She waited in breathless anxiety and muttered as she stood. A voice cried out in the King's room, then followed a silence like that of death, and Macbeth came leaping out, with a blood-stained dagger in each hand. His face was ghastly pale, his eyes were fixed in a wild stare, and he was almost mad with terror. He had stabbed the King.

One of the men had muttered in his sleep as Macbeth waited to deliver the deadly stroke, and said, "God bless us," and the other said, "Amen." The murderer thought he heard a great voice crying in his ear, and terror-stricken he hurried from the fearful place. And still the voice rang through his brain:

“ ‘*Sleep no more!*

*Macbeth does murder sleep*’—the innocent sleep,  
*Sleep that knits up the ravell’d steave of care,*  
*The death of each day’s life, sore labour’s bath,*  
*Balm of hurt minds, great nature’s second course,*  
*Chief nourisher in life’s feast,—*

‘*Sleep no more.*

*Glamis hath murder’d sleep, and therefore Cawdor*  
*Shall sleep no more: Macbeth shall sleep no more.’ ”*

Trembling like a terrified child the strong soldier stood before his wife, his mind filled with threatening images of doom. She thought at first that his heart had failed him but when she learned that he had forgotten to smear the grooms with the blood, she snatched the daggers from his hands and rushed into the room where the murdered King lay. When she returned her hands were red with blood, for she had dipped them in the awful stream and smeared the faces of the sleeping chamberlains with the crimson stains.

A loud knocking upon the outer gate alarmed them, for a moment it seemed like the summons of God to their guilty souls. Daylight had come and the storm had blown itself out, but the sun rose heavily above the clouds and the red gleams looked sullen and threatening. Two noblemen were standing at the gate and their servants hammered upon the stout oaken planks. The old porter, asleep by his watchfire, roused himself slowly and grumbled as he sought his keys. “Knock, knock, knock,” he muttered. He had little need to bid the men outside keep knocking, for they seemed as if they meant to hammer the gate to pieces. So loud was it that Macbeth himself came from the castle and

was at hand when Macduff and Lennox pushed their way past the porter. The King had commanded them to arouse him at an early hour and all the night long they had been kept awake by the storm. Macduff went to the chamber of the King but paused upon the threshold, for the dreadful sight appalled him. There lay Duncan, with his white skin laced with blood and many great wounds upon his body. The grooms started up, for their faces and hands were covered with blood and two unwiped daggers lay by their pillows. They appeared distracted and Macduff turned and gave the alarm. Macbeth drew his sword and dashed past him and with a shout of anger thrust his weapon through the half-awakened grooms.

Lady Macbeth now joined the alarmed courtiers, but when she saw Macbeth and heard his vivid story of the finding of the murdered King, she fell to the ground as though her death had come. All said that the chamberlains had committed the crime, but Malcolm and Donalbain suspected that Macbeth knew more about the matter than he confessed. They dreaded him and fled, the one to England and the other to Ireland. Macduff took horse and rode in hot haste to his castle in Fife.

Thus Macbeth, being nearest the crown now that the others had fled, ascended the throne by the way of treachery and blood, and the desire of his heart was attained. But his mind was like the stormy sea which cannot rest; he was haunted with suspicion and fear of treachery, and ever in his mind there ran the prophecy of the witches that Banquo's children should be kings. He feared the company of his wife and left her much in lonely melancholy. He

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determined to sweep Banquo and Fleance from his path.

"They hail'd him father to a line of kings," he muttered as he paced his room with restless steps.

*"Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown  
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,  
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,  
For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind ;  
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd ;  
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace  
Only for them, and mine eternal jewel  
Given to the common enemy of man,  
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings !  
Rather than so, come, fate, into the list,  
And champion me to the utterance !"*

His busy mind now worked out a plan for the murder of those he feared. A great banquet had been arranged at the palace, to which Banquo and Fleance had been invited. Their way to it led through a lonely park, and in a dark covert Macbeth stationed three murderers with orders to waylay and kill the chief and his son, and to return with the tidings of their death to him. Banquo was slain, but the lad escaped and from him there descended a race of kings who ruled in Scotland and finally united the ancient crown with that of England under King James the First, and thus the prophecy of the weird sisters was fulfilled.

With anxious expectancy Macbeth awaited the news from the murderers, but rage possessed him when he heard that Fleance had escaped. The stately



Touchstone laughed at the verses  
[See page 126]



"O, never shall sun that morrow see!"

[See page 140]

hall was filled with guests, the lights shone down upon bright armour and flashing jewels, and many words of welcome greeted the King as he strode to take his place in the great chair of State which had been set for him. But as he looked he saw therein a ghastly figure with gory locks, which pointed at him with a finger of scorn and condemnation. Macbeth shrieked out in such terror that the guests arose in alarm. Lady Macbeth quieted them and the chair became vacant, for its ghostly occupant had vanished. But once again it came and Macbeth beheld it with a quaking heart and trembling lips. Every one noticed his alarm and caught his words of fear. All thought of merriment was dispelled and the guests withdrew. Some to take horse and ride for safety to England. Others to brood over the strange words which had fallen from the lips of the King. And now Macbeth did not know which way to turn for safety. One by one his great nobles were slipping away and news came that Malcolm had joined old Siward of Northumberland, a stubborn Border fighter, and was busy raising soldiers to advance into Scotland with the encouragement of Edward, King of England.

In his distress Macbeth turned for guidance to the witches, those wild, weird sisters who had met him on the blasted heath in the night of storm. He found them in a gloomy cave. They asked him ~~what he would~~ would hear the tidings of the future from them ~~and~~ the evil spirits. Macbeth desired their ~~answers~~ and at their command apparitions arose ~~and~~ ~~talked~~ to the King. The first was an armed head, ~~which~~ ~~told~~ Macbeth beware of Macduff, Thane of Fife. The ~~second~~ was a blood-bespattered child, who said ~~that in the time~~

of woman should harm Macbeth. The third was a child crowned, with a tree in his hand, who said :

*“ Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care  
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are :  
Macbeth shall never vanquish’d be until  
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him.”*

Thus encouraged, Macbeth demanded to know more and a wonderful show of eight kings passed in slow procession before him. They were monarchs of Scotland, and some bore two-fold balls and treble sceptres, signs that they ruled over several kingdoms. And following them and pointing to them in triumph was the figure of the murdered Banquo, and then Macbeth realised how great a prey had slipped through his fingers when Fleance had escaped his cruel designs. He rejoiced, however, in the thought that his security was established, for who can impress the forest and bid the tree unfix his earth-bound root ? Great Birnam wood could be seen waving its leafy branches from the battlements of Macbeth’s castle, and what power could bid it march to high Dunsinane hill ? And if none born of woman could harm Macbeth, why, surely he might sleep in peace, in spite of all the mutterings of the thunder of hate.

But all unknown to him, Macduff, the Thane of Fife, by one of those strange tragedies of a rough fighting age, had come into the world in a way which fulfilled this mysterious condition, and when Macbeth sent a company of murderers against him he, too, like Malcolm and Fleance, had escaped and fled away. But Macbeth’s assassins took their revenge upon his inno-

cent wife and children, and slew them mercilessly upon the threshold of Macduff's castle. Macbeth was now a moody, suspicious, lonely, bloodthirsty tyrant, whose sword was ever ready to smite down those whom he suspected. Old friends fell away from him, and his wife, tortured by the agonies of remorse, no longer sought or desired his companionship. His days were passed in fear and his nights in torment, for he could not sleep. When he killed Duncan he had murdered sleep, and thenceforward the long dark hours became a terror to him. Oftentimes, he wished for death, for he could not bear the affliction of the terrible thoughts and dreams which shook him nightly.

*"Better be with the dead,  
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace.  
Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;  
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,  
Can touch him further."*

His mind was full of scorpions which tormented and stung, his evil devices had returned to plague their inventor, and even-handed justice was forcing to his own lips the poisoned chalice that he had prepared. Rapidly the storm-clouds were gathering over his head, black, threatening, deadly, and he knew that before long the lightning flash would come and smite him to the earth.

In England, Malcolm, Macduff and some old Scottish nobles with ten thousand warlike men were marching over the Border and streaming through the Trossachs and on one day of bitter remembrance the Thane of Fife

received the message which made him the bitterest foe of Macbeth. Ross brought the tidings that his castle had been surprised and Lady Macduff, her children, kinsfolk, and servants had been savagely murdered by order of the King.

*"All my pretty ones?  
Did you say all? all?"*

Malcolm tried to comfort the heartbroken thane, and said in tones of cheer :

*"Dispute it like a man,"*

and Macduff replied :

*"I shall do so ;  
But I must also feel it as a man :  
I cannot but remember such things were,  
That were most precious to me. . . .  
O, I could play the woman with mine eyes,  
And braggart with my tongue ! But, gentle heavens,  
Cut short all intermission ; front to front  
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself ;  
Within my sword's length set him ; if he 'scape,  
Heaven forgive him too !"*

Malcolm grasped the hand of his friend, and the remembrance of his own father's cruel, untimely death put steel within his heart. Said he :

*"This tune goes manly.  
Come, go we to the King ; our power is ready ;  
Our lack is nothing but our leave. Macbeth  
Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above  
Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may ;  
The night is long that never finds the day."*

And so the army pressed on until the soldiers pitched their camp for the night within the dark coverts and thick trees of Great Birnam wood, and saw beneath the red glow of the setting sun the royal castle of the cruel Macbeth.

After the murder of King Duncan, Lady Macbeth had never known a moment's peace. She had gained a crown, which was like a band of red-hot metal about her head; and a position of honour, which ate like a corroding acid into her brain; and for these she had flung away love, companionship, rest, sleep, and peace of mind. She was no longer the counsellor of her husband, for a common guilt had destroyed their mutual confidence. Nothing could bring peace nor give her heart-ease. She could not rest day nor night, for conscience was like a raging fire within her. She could not bear the darkness and commanded that lights should always burn in her chamber. When, tired out, she fell asleep, her mind wandered back to the scene of the crime and she acted again the dreadful incidents of that awful night. Terrified, she would leap from her couch and with deep sighs and groans strive to cleanse her hands from the smell and stains of blood.

"Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!" Then she would start and stand with wide-open unseeing eyes, listening, hardly daring to breathe.

♪ "To bed, to bed; there's knocking at the gate: come, come, come, give me your hand: what's done cannot be undone: to bed, to bed, to bed." Her waiting-maid used to see her walking like a spectre about her room, clad in her night-robcs, with a lighted taper in her hand, and one night her physician watched

her. He had taken his post for two nights and on the third he saw her rise and go through all the strange movements, and the convulsive, terrified washing of her hands.

Macbeth was in his room in the strongly fortified castle of Dunsinane. All around him arose the heavy walls and frowning bastions. The gate was barred, the drawbridge up and the portcullis down, but he was quaking with a nameless fear. His watchers had reported that a great army was near at hand and he was making hasty preparation. His scouts were scouring all the country round, and horsemen rode fast and far to summon soldiers to his banner. Seyton, his armour-bearer, waited to attend upon the King, but Macbeth was heavy of mind.

He walked restlessly to and fro, muttering :

*“ This push*

*Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now.*

*I have lived long enough : my way of life*

*Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf,*

*And that which should accompany old age,*

*As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,*

*I must not look to have ; but, in their stead,*

*Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,*

*Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.”*

“ How does your patient, doctor ? ” he said as he turned to the physician.

*“ Not so sick, my lord,*

*As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,*

*That keep her from her rest.”*

Macbeth knew what that meant for it touched the depth of his own anguish.

With a weary sigh he said :

*“ Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuff’d bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart ? ”*

With grave emphasis the physician replied :

*“ Therein the patient must minister to himself.”*

In the thick shades of Birnam wood the soldiers of Malcolm were lying and in order to mask their approach each man was ordered to take a leafy bough and bear it before him when the advance was sounded. Thus when the thousands advanced it looked as though the wood itself were marching towards Dunsinane. The watchers on the castle walls beheld the strange sight in wonder, and one man, stationed on a hill outside signalled to his fellows, and Macbeth was told that as they watched, lo, Birnam wood began to move. He heard the news with fury, and then he steeled his heart and cried out.

*! “ Blow, wind ! come, wrack !*

*At least we’ll die with harness on our back.”*

While Macbeth was giving orders for the defence of the castle a cry resounded from within the Queen’s chamber and servants announced the death of Lady Macbeth. This tragedy pointed the way to the unknown future which lay beyond the mysterious portal

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of death. The end had come, but Macbeth thought of the past and of the to-morrow. And then he said :

*“ She should have died hereafter ;  
 There would have been a time for such a word.  
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
 To the last syllable of recorded time ;  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !  
 Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
 And then is heard no more : it is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.”*

But now the sounds of battle were heard outside, and his soldierly instincts triumphing over all his fears, Macbeth commanded the alarum bell to be rung and led his followers in a fierce attack upon the invaders. He was filled with the fury of the bear chained to the stake surrounded by the baying hounds, and his sword cleft a way for him through the crowded ranks of his enemies. He slew young Siward, but swerved when he saw Macduff, for he remembered that the Spirits had told him to beware of the Thane of Fife. But Macduff was resolved to bring him to his sword’s point and fought his way to him. Macbeth cried out that no man born of woman could harm him and then he learned how Macduff had first seen the light of earth. He would have turned aside and fought with other foemen, but his adversary taunted him with cowardice and swore that he would tie him to a pole, that all might gaze upon and point the finger of scorn

at him and say, "Here you may see the tyrant." This stung Macbeth to the quick for he could not endure the thought of the curses of the rabble and so he sprang to the attack. In the end he was beaten down and slain, his head was struck off and laid at the feet of Malcolm, who was afterwards crowned King of Scotland, and thus the long nightmare of crime and darkness ended and the sun shone upon a happy and contented people.

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

**O**N the great plain of Attica, watered by the Kephisos and the brook Ilissus, and girded by its hills, Parnassus, Hymettus, Pentelicon, and Lycabettus, there stands the famous city of Athens. Not many miles away, the sunlit waters of unconquered Salamis, the Bay of Eleusis, and the bold Saronic Gulf enclose the land in a belt of purple sea; and crowning the great Acropolis is the Parthenon, the fairest, noblest structure the world has ever seen. Many years ago a Duke named Theseus ruled in Athens, and was betrothed to Queen Hippolyta. He was a famous warrior and had fought against her nation of the Amazons, and, as he said, had woo'd Hippolyta with his sword, and won her love by doing her injury. To make amends he promised great rejoicings, triumphs, and revellings, and commanded his master of the ceremonies, Philostrate, to prepare his marriage celebrations with richest magnificence. By an ancient law of Athens it had been enacted that a father had the absolute disposal of his daughter's hand in marriage. If she were disobedient the penalty was death, but this sentence could only be pronounced by the reigning Duke.

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A nobleman, of rather stubborn temper, named Egeus, had a lovely daughter whose name was Hermia. Her father had chosen a young man called Demetrius to be her husband, but this did not quite accord with the lady's wish, and she refused to marry him. Therefore her father appealed to Duke Theseus, saying that her lover, Lysander, had bewitched her, singing by moonlight under her window, giving her rings, bracelets, gawds, and other conceits, and with these allurements stealing her love and destroying her obedience to her father. He begged for the ancient privilege of Athens to be extended to him in order that he might enforce his commands, and compel her to marry Demetrius, who was the choice of Egeus; or that he might, on the other hand, bring about her punishment. Duke Theseus begged Hermia to consider her position, reminding her how much was involved in her disobedience. He said that by the law it meant death or banishment to a nunnery, where she would live in shady cloister imprisoned, chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon. "Thrice-blessed they that so undergo this maiden pilgrimage," said Theseus, "but earthlier happy is the rose distill'd, than that which, withering on the virgin thorn, grows, lives and dies in single blessedness." Hermia replied that she could not wed where she did not love, and rather than take Demetrius she would accept the alternative of death or a single life. Lysander pleaded that he was as well-born and well-possessed as the man chosen by Egeus, and urged, moreover, that Demetrius had won the heart of a lady named Helena, who returned his advances with an affection of doting idolatry. Theseus, thus reminded, recalled the fact that he had heard the story from

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others, and this determined him to give the parties time to reconsider their resolves. When Lysander and Hermia were left together they sorrowed with each other, and Lysander said that the course of true love never did run smooth, and that war, death, sickness, mistake, and tyranny often laid siege to it :

*" Swift as a shadow, short as any dream ;  
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,  
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,  
And ere a man hath power to say ' Behold,'  
The jaws of darkness do devour it up :  
So quick bright things come to confusion."*

But Lysander, although he moralised, had no intention of losing Hermia. He had a wealthy aunt, a widow who lived some seven leagues from Athens. In her house he knew that the law would not be able to touch them, so he suggested a flight and secret marriage. On the morrow Hermia was to steal out of her father's house at nightfall, and join her lover in a wood which lay about a league away, and once there Lysander was certain that he could lead his sweetheart in safety beyond the jurisdiction of Athens. As they arranged the details of their flight, Helena, the lady to whom Demetrius was said by Lysander to be inconstant, came in. Lysander told her what they had agreed upon :

*" To-morrow night, when Phœbe doth behold  
Her silver visage in the watery glass,  
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,  
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,  
Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal."*

And Hermia added :

*“ And in the wood, where often you and I  
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,  
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,  
There my Lysander and myself shall meet  
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,  
To seek new friends and stranger companies.”*

Helena, when they had left her, bewailed her unhappy lot, although one would have thought that the running away of Hermia would rather help her to win Demetrius. Helena thought that she could secure his favour by betraying the secret of the coming flight, and so she told him all that she had heard. A night and day passed, and then the fateful time arrived. Hermia made all her preparations, and when the moonlight showed the hour she stole quietly away, and soon passed into the shadows of the wood. Lysander was already at his station in the coverts. But jealous eyes had watched the flight of Hermia, and quickly Demetrius and Helena were following on her track. Demetrius had not reckoned upon the company of the infatuated Helena, and in his anger threatened her with harm if she ventured into the dark wood, but love made her fearless, and she said it was not night when she could see the face of Demetrius, and that the loneliest place in the wood had worlds of company if he were there to share the solitude with her. He said that he did not, and could not love her, and she replied :

*“ And even for that do I love you the more.  
I am your spaniel ; and, Demetrius,  
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you :  
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,*

*Neglect me, lose me ; only give me leave,  
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.  
What worser place can I beg in your love,—  
And yet a place of high respect with me,—  
Than to be used as you use your dog ? ”*

But this touching and humble avowal did not move Demetrius to kindness, and he broke away from Helena, and rushed into the recesses of the wood. Now this forest was an enchanted place when the moon was shining, and full of wonders at all times. It was very large, and every kind of bird seemed to nest therein, and its glades rang with their sweet melody, the ousel-cock, the thristle, the wren, the finch, the sparrow, the lark, and the cuckoo. And there were also clamorous owls and sweet nightingales, wild geese, russet-pated choughs, shining glow-worms, humming-bees, butterflies with many-coloured wings, and mice with leathern ones, gliding snakes with enamelled skin. Brown squirrels played and leaped from tree to tree. In fact, every lovely animal and bird which takes delight in sunshine or shade seemed to make its home in this wood ; and there were also wild beasts, which the huntsmen followed with their splendid hounds in the western valley even up to the mountain's top. These hounds belonged to Duke Theseus, and very proud he was of them. He used to say :

*“ My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,  
So flew'd, so sanded ; and their heads are hung  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew ;  
Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls ;  
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,  
Each under each. A cry more tuneable*

# A Midsummer Night's Dream 161

*Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,  
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly."*

But most beautiful of all were the lovely dells and glades, rich with their carpet of flowers and grass ; and the sweet banks where the wild thyme, the oxlip, and nodding violet grew, canopied over with a growth of luscious woodbine, sweet musk-roses, and eglantine. And sometimes the Queen of the Fairies, Titania, slumbered on a bank, her covering a glittering thrown snake-skin, and guardian fairies kept watch and ward while she slept. Oberon, the King of the Fairies, and Titania, his Queen, lived in this beautiful forest, and when the moon shone, to those who had eyes to see and ears to hear, the glades and coverts were filled with tiny, glancing forms, clad in lovely gossamer, and quaint music made the heart light and the feet trip in joyous measure. Like the wind sighing gently through the flowers and grasses sweet sounds would sweep along the glades, and when the Fairy Queen lay sleeping, fairy singers kept all evil things away. This is one of their songs :

*" You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
Thorny hedge-hogs, be not seen ;  
Newts and blindworms, do no wrong,  
Come not near our jairy queen.*

*Chorus :*

*Philomel, with melody  
Sing in our sweet lullaby ;  
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby :  
Never harm,  
Nor spell, nor charm,  
Come our lovely lady nigh ;  
So, good night, with lullaby.*

*“ Weaving spiders, come not here ;  
 Hence, you long-legg’d spinners, hence !  
 Beetles black, approach not near ;  
 Worm nor snail, do no offence.  
 Philomel, with melody  
 Sing in our sweet lullaby ;  
 Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby.”*

The fairies were all lovely children of the midsummer moonlight, light as the fancies of a dream, borne on gossamer wings, always bright and always changing, fantastic but sweet, grotesque but ever beautiful. If you want to see them you must have the poet’s eye and the poet’s imagination, for it is said :

*“ The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;  
 And as imagination bodies forth  
 The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen  
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
 A local habitation and a name. ”*

Oberon, King of the Fairies, and Titania, his Queen, had had a quarrel over a little Indian boy whose mother was a votaress of Titania’s order, a companion whom she loved, and with whom she often talked, in the spiced Indian air, sitting where the gentle waves lapped on the golden sands, and watching the round sails bearing the ships across the ocean. Oberon begged this little changeling boy from Titania, but she refused, and thus a quarrel arose between them, deepened a little also because Titania said that Oberon loved Hippolyta, and he on his part retorted that his Queen loved Theseus, Duke of Athens. When they met in grove or green by



" How comes it now, my husband, that thou art then estranged  
from thyself? "

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It was love at first sight  
[See page 230]

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the clear fountain, or in the glades spangled by the starlight or the moonlight, they used to upbraid each other with such fairy violence that all the elves quaked with fear, and crept into acorn-cups to hide themselves, for quarrelling makes even fairyland a very dreary place. But Oberon had a faithful follower called Puck, a merry wanderer of the night, sometimes called Robin Goodfellow, a very mischievous and tricky spirit, one who was always ready for a frolic. He could change himself into any form, and was so speedy that he could put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes. Sometimes he would neigh like a mare, and set the stables in an uproar, causing the stable-lads to rush out to see what made the horses prance and kick ; again, he would change himself into a rosy little apple floating in an ale tankard, and when some prosy old woman was about to take a drink, he would bob about, and hit her lips, and make her spill the ale over her clothes ; at other times, he would become a three-legged stool, and when some stout old dame thought to have a rest upon it, he would slip from under her, and down upon the floor she would come with a sounding whack, which made every one in the room roar with laughter. But his most favourite device was to shine like a lantern, in some dark place, and lead people over vale and hill, through fens and ditches, and into thorn-bushes, where the sharp prickles caught their clothes and scratched their faces and legs. Always ready for mischief, and always wide awake, Puck was the life of the fairy forest, the very clown of spirits. Love had never touched him with his sharp arrow, although every one else had succumbed in their turn. King Oberon called him to his side and said :

*“ My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest  
Since once I sat upon a promontory,  
And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin’s back,  
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,  
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,  
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,  
To hear the sea-maid’s music.  
That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,  
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,  
Cupid all arm’d : a certain aim he took  
At a fair vestal throned by the west,  
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,  
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts,  
But I might see young Cupid’s fiery shaft  
Quench’d in the chaste beams of the watery moon,  
And the imperial votaress passed on,  
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.  
Yet mark’d I where the bolt of Cupid fell :  
It fell upon a little western flower,  
Before milk-white, now purple with love’s wound,  
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.  
Fetch me that flower ; the herb I shew’d thee once :  
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid  
Will make or man or woman madly dote  
Upon the next live creature that it sees.  
Fetch me this herb ; and be thou here again  
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.”*

Puck darted away for this most valuable herb, which was soon in his possession, and it was not long ere he was back at Oberon’s side. In the meantime Oberon had been an unseen listener to the rude words which Demetrius had addressed to Helena, when he fled from her, and

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the tender heart of the Fairy King was grieved. He determined to help the lady, so when Puck came up he sent him off again to search the forest for an Athenian, and to smear his eyelids with some of the magic juice, so that when Demetrius awaked from sleep, his eyes resting upon Helena, he would fall in love with her. But Puck made a mistake, for in his search he discovered Lysander and Hermia fast asleep, and thinking Lysander to be the Athenian, he squeezed the juice upon his eyelids. With the remainder of the magical liquid Oberon went quietly to the flowery bed where Titania reposed and touched her eyelids, and said :

*“ What thou seest when thou dost wake,  
Do it for thy true-love take ;  
Love and languish for his sake :  
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,  
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,  
In thy eye that shall appear  
When thou wakest, it is thy dear :  
Wake when some vile thing is near.”*

Now, coming through the wood about this time was a company of rough-looking men : Nick Bottom, a weaver ; Francis Flute, a bellows-mender ; Peter Quince, a carpenter ; Robin Starveling, a tailor ; Tom Snout, a tinker ; and Snug, a joiner. They had determined to take part in the marriage festivities of the Duke and Hippolyta, and had arranged to act a play, called “ The lamentable story of Pyramus and Thisbe.” They were hard-handed men, who never laboured with their minds, and had not tried their memories with learning, but in simpleness and from a rough sense of duty they thought by their acting to please Duke Theseus. Peter

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Quince was stage manager, and had to speak the prologue of the play, which had been composed by themselves.

*“ If we offend, it is with our good will.  
That you should think, we come not to offend,  
But with good will. To show our simple skill,  
That is the true beginning of our end.  
Consider, then, we come but in despite.  
We do not come, as minding to content you,  
Our true intent is. All for your delight,  
We are not here.”*

Quince was not careful of his stops, and so the speech was like a tangled chain, nothing impaired but all disordered. And then he gave an indication of the play in these words :

*“ Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show ;  
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.  
This man is Pyramus, if you would know ;  
This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.  
This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present  
Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder ;  
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are conten  
To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.  
This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,  
Presenteth Moonshine ; for, if you will know,  
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn  
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.  
This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,  
The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,  
Did scare away, or rather did affright ;  
And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,  
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.*

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*Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,  
And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain :  
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,  
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast ;  
And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,  
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,  
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain  
At large discourse, while here they do remain."*

The rest of the play was couched in language very much like the prologue, and just what might have been expected from such rude and unlettered mechanicals. Nick Bottom was the greatest clown among them, loud-voiced and self-opinionative. He would have taken all the characters himself if they had allowed him, and especially desired to play the lion, a part which was nothing but roaring. "Let me play the lion too ; I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me ; I will roar, that I will make the Duke say, ' Let him roar again, let him roar again.' " But Quince said that he would fright the Duchess and the ladies, and that would be enough to cause them all to be hanged, whereupon Bottom promised to aggravate his voice so that he would roar as gently as any sucking dove or a nightingale. Quince said that the only part for Bottom was that of Pyramus, the hero, and so the clown had to be content. They came to a green plot, near by a hawthorn brake where Titania the Fairy Queen was sleeping, and began to rehearse their parts. Bottom delivered his speech, and waited behind the brake for Thisbe to enter. As he stood there Puck bewitched him and stuck an ass's head upon his shoulders. It was a rough, hairy head with long ears. " Bless thee, Bottom ! " cried

Quince, when the clown stepped forth. "Bless thee! thou art translated," and in wild terror, for Puck was among them playing his sportive antics, they all took to their heels and ran. Bottom watched them with the solemn eyes of an ass, and shaking his head, he sat down on the grass and began to sing. His voice had a weird, strange sound, for both words and tune were mangled by passing through an ass's head.

*"The ousel-cock so black of hue,  
With orange-tawny bill,  
The throstle with his note so true,  
The wren with little quill;  
The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,  
The plain-song cuckoo gray,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark,  
And dares not answer nay."*

As he threw back his clumsy head and sang, the unmelodious discord awakened Titania, who said: "I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again. Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note." Her eye was enthralled by his lovely shape, and when he spoke she declared that he was as wise as he was beautiful.

The infatuated Queen said that he must remain by her side for ever, and promised to give him fairies to attend on him, to fetch him jewels from the deep, and sing him to sleep, while he lay on a bed of pressed flowers. She summoned her four fairies, Pease-blossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard-seed, and told them to feed Bottom with apricocks and dewberries, purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries, with honey-bags stolen from the bees, and to light him with wax tapers lighted at the fiery glowworm's eyes, and to fan him with the wings of painted butter-

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flies. Bottom said that if he cut his finger Cobweb would be a welcome friend, and that he was well acquainted with Mustard-seed, for his kindred had made his eyes water many a time; he desired his better acquaintance, especially with ox-beef. Queen Titania led him to her bower. "Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed," she said, with loving looks and tender words, "while I thy amiable cheeks do coy, and stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head, and kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy." Bottom liked it, and asked Pease-blossom to scratch his head, and told Cobweb to kill a red-hipped humble-bee for him and bring him the honey-bag.

"Have a care," said he, "that the honey-bag break not; I would be loth to have you overflown with a honey-bag. And Mustard-seed, help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch."

"Wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?" said Queen Titania. She had all the harmony of the fairy world at her command, but Bottom said: "I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones."

Titania asked him if he were hungry, and promised to fetch him new nuts from a squirrel's hoard, but Bottom said that he preferred a bottle of hay or a handful or two of dried peas. He grew drowsy and nodded his ass's head. Titania wreathed her arms about him, and as he fell asleep she murmured:

*"So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
Gently entwist; the female ivy so*

*Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.*

*O, how I love thee ! how I dote on thee !”*

And, crowning his hairy temples with a coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers, upon which the dew stood like round and orient pearls, the enamoured Queen watched her beloved until she too fell asleep, and the two slumbered side by side. Meanwhile strange things were happening in the forest. Lysander, whose eyes had been smeared by Puck, awaked, and saw Helena, who by chance came that way. Immediately he fell in love with her and turned away in scorn from Hermia, his betrothed. Helena thought that he was mocking her, and upbraided him for his faithlessness and want of gentle courtesy. He would have nothing to do with Hermia, but followed Helena, leaving his sweetheart still asleep.

Demetrius meanwhile had been discovered fast asleep by King Oberon, and the fairy King, knowing that Puck had made a mistake, now smeared the eyes of Demetrius with the juice. He awoke, and first cast his eyes upon Helena, who, running from Lysander, had happened to come near him. Immediately he fell violently in love with her, and so the once-despised lady now found herself beloved by both Demetrius and Lysander.

“O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine !” cried Demetrius,

*“To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne ?  
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show  
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow !  
That pure congealed white, high Taurus’ snow,  
Fann’d with the eastern wind, turns to a crow  
When thou hold’st up thy hand : O, let me kiss  
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss !”*

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Helena thought that he was mocking her in the presence of Lysander, and at that moment Hermia entered, tearful and alarmed because Lysander had not been near her when she awaked. Her face paled when her lover told her that his love for her had turned to hate and that Helena had all his heart. The warm friendship which had existed between the two ladies seemed to vanish for ever in the dark misunderstanding which clouded their minds, but Helena felt more hurt by the treachery, as she considered it, of Hermia, than she did by the seeming ridicule of Demetrius and Lysander.

"Have you conspired with these," she said, "to bait me with this foul derision: have you forgotten our schooldays' friendship and childhood innocence, when we grew together two lovely berries moulded on one stem, like to a double cherry, seeming parted, but yet an union in partition. One in heart and in love?"

Hermia protested that she loved Lysander, and clung to him, but he, lost to all sense of courtesy, called her an Ethiopie, a tawny Tartar, a cat, a vile thing, a venomous serpent, and said that he desired never to see her again. Then in despair Hermia turned to Helena, and upbraided her for stealing away Lysander's love, and stung to fury, Demetrius challenged Lysander to deadly combat.

All this was observed by King Oberon, who commanded Puck to bring a dense fog upon the forest, so that the infuriated men could not find each other.

When each had exhausted himself with a fruitless search, and had fallen by the wayside asleep, Puck was told to smear the eyes of Lysander with another herb, the effect of which would be to restore his wonted sight, and then Lysander and Hermia would be happy in each

other's love again. All this the sprite did, and soon Helena and Hermia, as well as Demetrius and Lysander, were utterly wearied and fast asleep. Then Puck squeezed the juice in Lysander's eye, singing as he did so this fairy song :

*" When thou wakest  
Thou takest  
True delight  
In the sight*

*Of thy former lady's eye :  
And the country proverb known,  
That every man should take his own,  
In your waking shall be shown :  
Jack shall have Jill ;  
Nought shall go ill ;  
The man shall have his mare again, and all  
shall be well."*

And then Oberon and Puck sped away to the fairy bower where Titania lay with snoring, thick-skull'd Bottom. The King had now the changeling boy for his servant, for Titania was so enraptured that she desired nothing save her lover. The King waved his wand over her and said to her :

*" Be as thou wast wont to be ;  
See as thou wast wont to see :  
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower  
Hath such force and blessed power.  
Now, my Titania ; wake you, my sweet Queen."*

Instantly the Fairy Queen started from her slumber and beheld the King. She shuddered when she looked on Bottom. " My Oberon," she said, with a little sigh of delight, " what visions have I seen, methought I was

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enamour'd of an ass. O how mine eyes do loathe his visage now ! ”

By this time the sun was climbing in the sky, the lark had sprung from his grassy bed and was winging his melodious way to the heavens, the forest had awakened, and the cheery sound of hunting horns was heard winding through the glades. Fairy music, too, uprose from brake and dell, and thousands of tiny elves and fairies danced around King Oberon and his Queen. Puck caused the ass's head to fly from off the shoulders of Bottom, and a few moments later Duke Theseus and Queen Hippolyta, followed by their court and attended by huntsmen with their hounds, drew near. Egeus recognised his daughter and her companions, and at the bidding of the Duke the huntsmen sounded their horns, and the sleepers, Demetrius, Lysander, Helena, and Hermia, awoke with a start.

“ Good morrow, friends,” said the Duke, “ how comes this gentle concord ? ”

Lysander was the first to speak, but he had not got further than the avowal of his plan to fly from Athens with Hermia when the angry father interposed with a demand for judgment.

Before the Duke could speak, however, Demetrius took up the tale, and told how—by what power he knew not—his love for Hermia had melted like the snow, and his heart was now wholly set upon Helena.

The looks of the young people spoke eloquently of their disposition towards each other, and Theseus could not at such a time be harsh. With a word of indulgence he postponed further inquiry, and told Egeus that it was his good pleasure to ~~oversee~~ his will :

*"For in the temple, by and by, with us  
These couples shall eternally be knit."*

The whole party then trooped back to Athens, with blowing of horns, barking of dogs, and merry songs from the light-hearted huntsmen.

Meanwhile the heavy-minded Bottom slowly awoke from sleep. He thought he was at the play, trying to remember his cue. "Heigh-ho," said he, stretching his arms and yawning, "heigh-ho, Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling!" He looked around in wonder at finding himself alone. "God's my life," he grumbled, "stolen hence, and left me asleep!" He yawned and rubbed his eyes, and peered about. "I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom."

He rose heavily from the ground, and shook his garments into place, and lumbered along the forest path, peering to the right and to the left, but seeing nothing, except the leaves and the thickets and now and again the glancing form of a leaping squirrel, or the flutter of a bird's wing. Shaking his head, and mutter-

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ing to himself, he came to the confines of the forest and saw, across the plain, the people thronging to the marriage festivities. Fortunately he was in time to take his part in the play which was to be performed before the Duke and his guests.

Late that evening, when darkness had fallen once again upon the earth, and the nuptials of three happy pairs had been solemnised with all the ceremony proper to a royal marriage, the palace of Duke Theseus was thronged with a brilliant company. Amidst the revels the company of rustic players came craving permission to be heard, and the promise of amusement from their antics accorded with the Duke's mood, and he gave orders that they should be permitted to present their tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe. His expectations were not disappointed. The absurdity of the play and its comic situations awakened mirth in all, and as the Duke said at the conclusion :

"Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy."

Midnight had now struck, and the Duke having dismissed his guests, the great palace hall was soon left silent and deserted. Not for long, however, for in came Puck with the exclamation :

*"I am sent with broom before,  
To sweep the dust behind the door."*

Quick upon his heels came Oberon and Titania with a host of fairy sprites sliding on the moonbeams that shone through the high windows and made a mellow patchwork on the floors. The fairy monarchs were

determined to take a share in the revels and they had come to bless the newly wedded couples.

Sweet music sounded and Oberon sang this song :

*“ Through the house give glimmering light,  
By the dead and drowsy fire :  
Every elf and fairy sprite  
Hop as light as bird from brier ;  
And this ditty, after me,  
Sing, and dance it trippingly.  
With this field-dew consecrate,  
Every fairy take his gait ;  
And each several chamber bless,  
Through this palace, with sweet peace,  
Ever shall in safety rest,  
And the owner of it blest.  
Trip away ; make no stay ;  
Meet me all by break of day.”*

The palace of King Theseus was a dreamland rich with fairy vision and entrancing music, for this old world becomes an enchanted kingdom when true Love is enthroned within it, and that which to dull eyes looks common and poor becomes soft and beautiful as a midsummer night's dream when eyes have been touched with the magic of Love.

## Julius Cæsar

**I**N the early spring-time, when the frowning face of winter was giving place to the genial aspect of the Italian summer-time, and the storms which sometimes swept the land were gathering together to hide themselves in Nature's darkest caverns, a great excitement thrilled the stately city of Rome. Julius Cæsar, soon to be the first and mightiest of the Roman Emperors, was returning from the conquest of his great rival Pompey, whom he had crushed at Pharsalia, and the citizens of Rome were thronging the streets to give him a royal welcome. The Republic, now almost at the end of the period of its rule by Governors and Senate, had seen the whole world brought under its sway by the military genius of Cæsar. It was a triumph which flattered the spirit of Rome, but thoughtful men saw that a new era of government was beginning, and that soon the supreme power in the State would be centred in the hands of one who would be called Imperator. Since the time of Tarquin the name of King had been abhorred, and, although Cæsar himself had said that Jupiter alone was King of the Romans, many knew that the day had almost gone by for any other rule save that of the undivided sway of one great dominating personality—

such a man, in fact, as Julius Cæsar. Already his friends in Rome were working, and rumour had gone round that at the feast of Lupercalia, in February, the Imperial crown would be offered him. The Consul Mark Antony was the foremost figure in this movement, and Cicero, the first orator of the Roman Bar and most elegant of all writers of the Latin language, had been impressed to deliver an oration. Secretly opposed to his high dignity were some of Cæsar's most trusted friends and fellow soldiers. Cassius, whose daring exploits at the battle of Carrhæ had saved the remains of the army of Crassus; Decius Brutus, Cæsar's faithful henchman in Gaul; young Cato, and others. It was generally believed that at the Ides of March, that is, the fifteenth day of the month, the Senate would offer the title of Imperator to Cæsar, and Cassius was doing all that lay in his power to win over to their side Marcus Brutus, nephew and son-in-law of Cato, whose great ancestor Brutus had expelled the infamous Tarquins from Rome. In multitudes the commoners thronged the streets, and soon the crash of martial music, the glitter of spear-point and armour, and a brilliant assembly of Senators, generals, and soldiers announced that Cæsar and his spouse Calpurnia were approaching. Rome had never witnessed a grander spectacle.

As Cæsar drew near a voice was heard from the crowd crying: "Cæsar, beware the Ides of March." A man was brought before the conqueror, and Cæsar looked steadfastly upon him, bidding him in cold stern accents repeat what he had to say. Once more the man said, "Beware the Ides of March."

"He is a dreamer; let us leave him," said Cæsar, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Pass on."

And the procession swept on, leaving Brutus and Cassius standing on one side. Brutus, the descendant of a long line of noble citizens, was a type of republicanism at its highest point and of Roman citizenship when the name of citizen was the noblest which could be conferred upon any man; to him the voice of the people was the voice of God, freedom the birthright which crowned a man with a diadem greater than that of any monarch, and in his mind the State meant every citizen acting in corporate capacity for the highest ends. He was honest, loyal, simple-minded, and patriotic; fanciful in some ways and credulous, but in no way given to suspicion. He saw the best in every one and said on one occasion :

"Countrymen,  
*My heart doth joy that yet in all my life,  
I found no man but he was true to me.*"

He sat high in all the people's hearts, and that which would appear offence in others his countenance, like richest alchemy, changed to virtue and to worthiness. He was gentle and kind to all about him, especially to his wife and servants, and once quietly removed a lute from the hands of his sleeping page, lest by the falling of the instrument the tired lad should be disturbed. Brutus was slow to make up his mind, and did little on impulse. In many ways an idealist and thinker, he lived in a world of great principles and abstract truths, and practical action did not come easy to him. Antony said that Brutus was the noblest Roman of them all ;

*“ All the conspirators, save only he,  
Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar ;  
He only, in a general honest thought  
And common good to all, made one of them.  
His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, ‘ This was a man ! ’ ”*

His kinsman Cassius was a man of very different mould and temperament, the politician who easily becomes a wire-puller and conspirator. He was thoughtful, studious, shrewd, worldly-wise, and crafty. Very simple when it suited, but always subtle and deceptive. Watchful, envious, ambitious, jealous, sarcastic, and bitter. He was a close observer and could weigh men with unfailing accuracy. He knew their weak points, and how to mould them to his will. He was tall and thin, with high forehead, piercing eyes and thin lips. He seldom smiled, and looked what he was, a clever, unscrupulous, cruel contriver of mischief. Cassius knew the value of a colleague like Brutus in a matter of such high import as a conspiracy against a Cæsar, and so he strove to win him to his side. He hinted that the love of honour which burned in Brutus was being extinguished by the power usurped by Cæsar, and wondered how Brutus could submit to one who, in spite of all, was only a weakly man.

“ Why,” said Cassius, as he watched the face of his companion,

*“ I was born free as Cæsar ; so were you :  
We both have fed as well, and we can both  
Endure the winter’s cold as well as he :  
For once, upon a raw and gusty day,*

*The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,  
Cæsar said to me, 'Darest thou, Cassius, now  
Leap in with me into this angry flood,  
And swim to yonder point?' Upon the word,  
Accoutred as I was, I plunged in  
And bade him follow: so indeed he did.  
The torrent roar'd, and we did buffet it  
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside  
And stemming it with hearts of controversy;  
But ere we could arrive the point proposed,  
Cæsar cried, 'Help me, Cassius, or I sink!'  
I, as Æneas our great ancestor  
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder  
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber  
Did I the tired Cæsar: and this man  
Is now become a god, and Cassius is  
A wretched creature, and must bend his body  
If Cæsar carelessly but nod on him."*

As he said this a great shout was heard from the place of the ceremony. Brutus started, and Cassius went on, urging argument after argument to show how weak in himself great Cæsar was, until Brutus, despite himself, was impressed. He loved liberty and had a passion for the freedom of the Roman citizens, and gradually he saw himself and Rome the playthings in a mighty soldier's hand. As he slowly grasped the meaning of Cassius, the applauding shouts of the multitude came again and again to his ears.

"Why man," said Cassius,

*"He doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus, and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs and peep about*

*To find ourselves dishonourable graves.*

*Men at some time are masters of their fates :*

*The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,*

*But in ourselves, that we are underlings."*

The conversation was interrupted by the return of the procession, and Cæsar, with Mark Antony at his left hand, came marching from the great square. Cæsar was excited by his triumph, but when he saw the pale, lean face of Cassius, with a lowering look upon it which seemed to threaten death, he started like a man who sees a deadly serpent in his path. He turned to Antony :

*" Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look ;*

*He thinks too much : such men are dangerous."*

Antony smiled, but Cæsar went on :

*" If my name were liable to fear,*

*I do not know the man I should avoid*

*So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much ;*

*He is a great observer, and he looks*

*Quite through the deeds of men : he loves no plays,*

*As thou dost, Antony ; he hears no music :*

*Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort*

*As if he mock'd himself, and scorn'd his spirit*

*That could be moved to smile at anything.*

*Such men as he be never at heart's ease*

*Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,*

*And therefore are they very dangerous.*

*I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd*

*Than what I fear ; for always I am Cæsar."*

The sunshine of the early spring day was now waning heavy banks of clouds swept up from the sea and

chill wind began to blow. Cæsar wrapped his cloak about him and the procession hurried forward, leaving Brutus and Cassius, with now a third, named Casca, gazing after them, and watching the brilliant train which went on to the palace of Cæsar. Casca was a conspirator of lively imagination and bitter tongue. His description of what had occurred on the place of the Lupercalia still further incensed Brutus and excited his mind against Cæsar. At length Brutus left them, and sought his own palace, wrapped in gloomy thought, and Cassius rejoiced because he felt sure that now he held the noblest Roman of them all in his crafty hand.

That night the fiercest storm that Rome had ever experienced broke over the city. The cross blue lightning seemed to open the expanse of heaven and the crashing thunder terrified the women and children, and even shook the courage of well-seasoned soldiers. Affrighted animals broke from their stables and rushed into the streets. A lion hurled itself against the bars of its cage in wild terror, and breaking loose, prowled near the Capitol. Men who had seen the ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam, until in its wild fury it seemed to join itself with the threatening clouds, were amazed at the storm and hid themselves. One man only appeared to rejoice in the uproar, one who laughed and shook his fist at the heavens, and bared his bosom to the lightning-flash. This man was Cassius, who seemed to see in the fury of the elements something of his own tumultuous spirit. He walked the streets and saw in all about him indications of the unrest which was agitating the Roman State. To his excited imagination it was the reply of the heavens to the call of the independent spirits in Rome, who were

rising in rebellion against the claims of Cæsar, and a summons to the conspirators to strike against the usurper. Suddenly he encountered Casca and Cinna. They were making their way to a meeting-place of the conspirators in Pompey's Porch. Said Cassius :

*" Now know you, Casca, I have moved already  
Some certain of the noblest-minded Romans  
To undergo with me an enterprise  
Of honourable-dangerous consequence ;  
And I do know, by this they stay for me  
In Pompey's porch : for now, this fearful night,  
There is no stir or walking in the streets,  
And the complexion of the element  
In favour's like the work we have in hand,  
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible."*

Like evil shadows of the night the cloaked conspirators, their faces muffled, and with stealthy footsteps, slunk along the deserted streets until they stood outside the house of Brutus. They waited, and when the door was opened, they slipped like furtive spectres into the house. Brutus was walking to and fro in his study, with hasty footsteps. A solitary taper flickered in the gloom. As he walked he muttered to himself :

*" Since Cassius first did whet me against Cæsar  
I have not slept.  
Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream :  
The Genius and the mortal instruments  
Are then in council, and the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection."*

He knew now that the death of Cæsar had been decided upon by the conspirators, and his noble spirit recoiled in horror from the thought. He tried to think of some other alternative whereby the Republic might be preserved, but his mind always returned to the same ghastly topic. He strove to picture Cæsar as an enemy which must be crushed, a serpent's egg, which hatch'd would as his kind grow mischievous, and therefore to be killed in the shell. As he walked restlessly to and fro he said :

*“He would be crown'd :*

*How that might change his nature, there's the question :*

*It is the bright day that brings forth the adder ;*

*And that craves wary walking. Crown him ?—that ;—*

*And then, I grant, we put a sting in him,*

*That at his will he may do danger with.*

*The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins*

*Remorse from power : and, to speak truth of Cæsar,*

*I have not known when his affections sway'd*

*More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof,*

*That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,*

*Whereto the climber-upward turns his face ;*

*But when he once attains the upmost round,*

*He then unto the ladder turns his back,*

*Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees*

*By which he did ascend : so Cæsar may ;*

*Then lest he may, prevent.”*

Letters inciting him to strike had been flung through the casements of his room and many subtle devices had been carried out by Cassius, so that when the conspirators arrived, Brutus was almost entirely won over to their side. A few words from Cassius, and Brutus

finally made up his mind. Cassius then urged that Antony should share the fate of Cæsar, but to this Brutus would not agree, for he said that they were sacrificers and not butchers, and that Mark Antony could do them no more injury than Cæsar's arm when Cæsar's head was off. Some were anxious to have Cicero with them in the plot, for as Metellus Cimber put it it would be well worth the while :

*“ O, let us have him, for his silver hairs  
Will purchase us a good opinion,  
And buy men's voices to commend our deeds :  
It shall be said his judgment ruled our hands ;  
Our youth and wildness shall no whit appear,  
But all be buried in his gravity.”*

But here again Brutus had his way, and Cicero's name was set aside. The storm had now almost spent itself and the grey dawn was struggling in fitful gleams through the murky sky. As silently as they had come the conspirators separated, Brutus watching them the while, with a face as gloomy as the sky. A light touch upon the shoulder aroused him from his dark musing, and he turned, to behold his wife, Portia.

“ Dear my lord,” she said, “ make me acquainted with your cause of grief. Why are you heavy, and what men to-night have had resort to you ; for here have been some six or seven, who did hide their faces even from darkness.”

Brutus could not share his heavy secret, even with his wife, and shook his head sadly.

*“ You are my true and honourable wife,  
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops  
That visit my sad heart.*

*By and by thy bosom shall partake  
The secrets of my heart."*

And with this she was fain to be content. But already she had guessed the secret and by an intuition realised that the death of Cæsar had been resolved upon by the conspirators.

Within the palace of Cæsar the night had been passed with strange unrest. Calpurnia had tossed sleeplessly upon her bed, and when at length sleep came to her tired eyelids, she was oppressed with frightful dreams and thrice screamed out, "Help, ho, they murder Cæsar." She thought she saw the statue of Cæsar, which, like a fountain with a hundred spouts, was running pure blood, and in the horrid stream many lusty Romans came with smiling faces to bathe their hands. She was so terrified by the omen that she begged Cæsar not to stir forth from the house and said : " O Cæsar ! these things are beyond all use, and I do fear them."

" What can be avoided," replied her husband, " whose end is purposed by the mighty gods ? Yet Cæsar shall go forth ; for these predictions are to the world in general as to Cæsar."

" When beggars die, there are no comets seen ; the heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes," returned Calpurnia.

Her soldier husband looked at her with a tender smile and replied :

*" Cowards die many times before their death ;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,  
It seems to me most strange that men should fear ;*

*Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come."*

Tidings of warning also came from the Augurs who made the sacrifices in the temple. It was their duty to discover the will of heaven before anything important was undertaken, by the flight of birds or from the body of the victim sacrificed. They would not have Cæsar leave his house on this fateful day. Cæsar was impressed by these successive warnings, and promised that Mark Antony should be sent to the Senate House to say that his leader was not well. Just then, Decius Brutus, Cæsar's comrade in many a hard struggle in Gaul, came in. He was a traitor, with a quick wit and ready tongue, and poured gentle ridicule upon the fears of Calpurnia and the warning of the priests. It was known all over Rome, he said, that on this day the Senate had concluded to give a crown to mighty Cæsar. They might change their minds and make a mock of one who was afraid to come because his wife had had ill dreams. Brutus, Trebonius, Casca and other conspirators now entered, and Antony came also to greet Cæsar. The crowds were gathering to see the procession pass to the Capitol and the legionaries had taken their places in the streets. Long-robed Senators walked with stately steps to the Senate House. In a narrow street a teacher of rhetoric, one Artemidorus of Cnidos, was standing. He was reading a paper which he had drawn up, and intended to place in the hand of Julius Cæsar. It ran as follows : " Cæsar, beware of Brutus ; take heed of Cassius ; come not near Casca ; have an eye to Cinna ; trust not Trebonius ; mark well Metellus Cimber ; Decius Brutus loves thee

not; thou hast wronged Caius Ligarius. There is but one mind in all these men, and it is bent against Cæsar. If thou beest not immortal, look about you; security gives way to conspiracy. The mighty gods defend thee!

“Thy lover, ARTEMIDORUS.”

Of all the warnings this was the most direct and explicit, and the writer had clearly indicated every traitor. It was a matter of life and death to Cæsar, for no one could doubt what his action would be after such a direct appeal. Artemidorus watched the procession winding its way to the Capitol, and when Cæsar had almost reached the base of Pompey's statue a momentary halt gave him the opportunity he sought. Pushing his way through the crowd, Artemidorus, standing near Decius Brutus and Trebonius, called out: “Hail, Cæsar! read this schedule.” Cæsar had just said, “The Ides of March are come,” and a voice had replied from the crowd, “Ay, Cæsar, but not gone,” and this reply had caused some excitement. Decius thrust himself before the teacher and begged Cæsar to read a petition on behalf of Trebonius, but Artemidorus was not thus to be baulked. Holding up the paper he shouted: “O Cæsar, read mine first; for mine's a suit that touches Cæsar nearer; read it, great Cæsar.” Cæsar pushed it aside with an impatient gesture. “What touches us ourselves shall be last served,” he said, and strode up to the Senate House. The conspirators clustered about him, their hands clutching their daggers, Decius Brutus, meanwhile, herding Cæsar as a drover does his cattle to the place of slaughter. This wicked conspirator had already persuaded Cæsar to leave

his palace, against the wishes of Calpurnia and the warnings of the Augurs, he had prevented the message of Artemidorus reaching the victim, and now he prepared to lead up to the final stroke. Trebonius had been bidden to draw Mark Antony away, and when he had done so, Decius signalled to Metellus Cimber to present his petition to Cæsar on behalf of Cimber's banished brother. He knelt before the great soldier, but his fawning courtesy was resented by Cæsar. Brutus stepped forward, adding his entreaties to those of Metellus. But Cæsar was inexorable and still refused, at the same time saying that if any prayers could move him, they would be the prayers of Brutus :

*" I am constant as the northern star,  
Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality  
There is no fellow in the firmament.  
The skies are painted with unnumber'd sparks ;  
They are all fire and every one doth shine ;  
But there's but one in all doth hold his place :  
So in the world ; 'tis furnish'd well with men,  
And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive ;  
Yet in the number I do know but one  
That unassailable holds on his rank,  
Unshaked of motion : and that I am he,  
Let me a little show it, even in this ;  
That I was constant, Cimber should be banish'd,  
And constant do remain to keep him so."*

This was a proud, ambitious speech, and dearly Cæsar was destined to pay for it. The traitors were now pressing closely about him, for they were all looked upon as personal friends of Cæsar, and the guards were not so alert as they would have been had the Emperor

been surrounded by those whose dispositions were more in doubt. The spiteful Casca was the first to strike, and then from every side vengeful blows rained upon the victim. He gathered his soldier's cloak about him, and Decius and others might have been reminded when they saw it of many famous victories won by Cæsar in Gaul in days when they were his closest friends and allies, and would have died to shield him from harm. Now they struck fiercely and without remorse, and in the wild confusion and horror no one seemed to remember the sacred ties of military faith and allegiance. Cæsar, wounded in many places and rapidly becoming weaker, staggered near to the base of Pompey's statue and was falling. At that instant Brutus struck him a heavy blow. The dying Cæsar turned a look of reproach upon him and murmuring, "You too, Brutus?" fell dead upon the pavement, pierced by more than thirty wounds. It was a foul assassination, begun by the dastard blow from behind delivered by Casca, and finished by the unkindest cut of all, from one whom Cæsar thought was his chiefest friend. The Senators fled in terror from the awful scene. The soldiers began to close their ranks, but with cries of "Liberty, freedom, and enfranchisement," and "Peace, freedom, and liberty," the assassins, waving their blood-stained daggers, which they had dipped again in the blood of Cæsar, rushed into the Forum among the common people. Antony broke from the crowd and escaped to his own house. The Romans, horrified by what had taken place, knew not whether to applaud the deed or condemn it, but the sight of Brutus, Cassius and the rest seemed for the moment to reassure them. They thronged to Pompey's statue and there with

pallid faces looked upon the bleeding form of Rome's greatest son.

Antony, though he had escaped to his house, could not rest within it. A burning desire for vengeance filled his heart, again and again he fancied he heard the cries of the assassins as they struck at Cæsar. He writhed in agony when he remembered that he had been attracted from his side at the very moment of his peril. And this thought opened his mind to the way of revenge. Why had Antony been spared, when his death might have been accomplished at the same time as that of Cæsar? Was it because Brutus and the rest desired to have his friendship? Antony was a man of ready intellect and soon saw the way clearly before him. Brutus and the conspirators had murdered Cæsar on the pathway of confidence and friendship. Antony determined that they should meet destruction by the same way. Instantly the plan of his vengeance flashed upon him. He despatched a servant to Brutus with a message craving an interview, under the promise of safe conduct, in order that he might be resolved how Cæsar had deserved to meet his death. If Brutus could satisfy him then Antony promised to follow the fortunes and affairs of noble Brutus through all the hazards of the unknown future, with all true faith. Brutus readily gave his word that Antony should be untouched and said that their swords had leaden points where Mark Antony was concerned. At this Antony left his house and hurried to the Capitol. The body of Julius Cæsar still lay where it had fallen and around it stood Brutus, Cassius, Decius, Metellus, Cinna, Trebonius, and Casca. Their hands, weapons, and garments were crimsoned with blood, and their

faces showed a fever of excitement. Antony glanced at them, but all his thoughts were fixed on the poor broken body which lay upon the marble pavement. Tears streamed from his eyes as he knelt and took the cold dead hand of Cæsar within his own. His voice was broken with his sobs :

“ *O mighty Cæsar ! dost thou lie so low ?  
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,  
Shrunk to this little measure ? Fare thee well.*”

There was a dead silence and after a while he rose and faced the assassins :

“ *I know not, gentlemen, what you intend,  
Who else must be let blood, who else is rank :  
If I myself, there is no hour so fit  
As Cæsar’s death’s hour, nor no instrument  
Of half that worth as those your swords, made rich  
With the most noble blood of all this world.  
I do beseech ye, if you bear me hard,  
Now, whilst your purpled hands do reek and smoke,  
Fulfil your pleasure. Live a thousand years,  
I shall not find myself so apt to die :  
No place will please me so, no mean of death,  
As here by Cæsar, and by you cut off,  
The choice and master spirits of this age.*”

Turning to the conspirators Antony then desired each one to shake him by the hand, and slowly and with an emphasis which did not escape the suspicious and ever-watchful Cassius, he pronounced their names and took their blood-stained hands in his, asking pardon the while from the dead Cæsar.

"Wilt thou be numbered among our friends," said Cassius.

"Therefore I took your hands," returned Antony, "and will be friends if you can give me reasons why and wherein Cæsar was dangerous?"

"Else were this a savage spectacle," said Brutus. "You shall be satisfied, Antony, even were you the son of Cæsar."

"That's all I seek, but give me leave, I pray you, to produce his body in the market-place, and as becomes a friend, speak in the order of his funeral?"

Again Cassius interposed to warn Brutus of the danger of this course. Antony had a winning tongue and the people would be moved by his oration. But Brutus said that before Antony spoke, he himself would address the people and show the reason why Cæsar had been destroyed. With this Cassius was forced to be content, but he feared the issue. Turning to Antony, Brutus told him that he had leave to address the people over the body of Cæsar, but on the strict condition, to which Antony agreed, that he should not import blame to the conspirators.

Meanwhile, the greatest confusion and fear reigned among the people. Many fled to their homes, some hurried from the city to find safety in the camp of Lepidus, Cæsar's general, who had been made Governor of Gaul and had not yet departed with his legions. Others thronged the streets, discussing in excited tones the awful event which had taken place. Brutus knew that it was imperative to reassure the crowds, so the conspirators hurried away, leaving Antony in charge of the body of Cæsar. Left alone, he felt that he could give his feelings vent.

Kneeling down and brushing away the tears which blinded him, Antony said :

*“ O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,  
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers !  
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man  
That ever lived in the tide of times.  
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood !  
Over thy wounds now do I prophesy,  
Which like dumb mouths do ope their ruby lips  
To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue,  
A curse shall light upon the limbs of men ;  
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife  
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy.”*

He was interrupted by a servant who came with a message to Antony from young Octavius Cæsar, nephew of Julius, which stated that Octavius with an armed following was within seven leagues of Rome. Octavius Cæsar was yet a mere boy, but he showed all the promise which was afterwards fulfilled in later life, when he became known to all the world under the name of Cæsar Augustus. With Antony and Lepidus he was destined to bring swift destruction upon Brutus and the conspirators.

In the great Forum the citizens had now assembled to hear Brutus and Antony speak concerning the dead Cæsar. Brutus, misled by the forged letters of Cassius, was still under the impression that the Romans had desired the death of the Emperor. Antony read their feelings far more accurately and had determined to rouse a storm against Brutus and the rest. The speech of Brutus was eloquent but uninspiring.

“ If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend

of Cæsar's, to him I say that Brutus' love to Cæsar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Cæsar, this is my answer; not that I loved Cæsar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Cæsar were living, and die all slaves, than that Cæsar were dead, to live all freemen? As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him; but as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love; joy for his fortune; honour for his valour; and death for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. With this I depart—that, as I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself, when it shall please my country to need my death."

He was answered by loud shouts, "Live, Brutus, live, live." "Bring him with triumph home unto his house." "Give him a statue with his ancestors." "Let Brutus be Cæsar," and so on. The crowd was moved by his earnest, simple words, and felt that Brutus was an enthusiast striving for the freedom of Rome, rather than an envious place-seeker who had destroyed a greater man in order that he might usurp his position. When Brutus had left the market-place Antony entered, followed by a funeral procession bearing the body of Cæsar. Over the dead figure was thrown the military cloak of Cæsar. He was greeted with murmurs of disapproval from the crowd and, some one cried out that Cæsar was a tyrant and that Rome was well rid of him. It was some time before silence was given, and Antony ascended the platform amid many hostile demonstrations on the part of the citizens. He had a difficult task before him, but he

had marked out his course and gradually won a hearing. He felt his way cautiously, and slowly gained the confidence of his hearers, first touching their compassion, then arousing their patriotic love and pride for Rome, and finally appealing to their own private interests and pleasures. Gradually he led them away from sympathy with the conspirators, harping upon the words,

*“ For Brutus is an honourable man ;  
So are they all, all honourable men.”*

He had given his word that he would not speak despitefully of Brutus and the rest, and by a skilful contrast of these words with the pitiful tragedy of which the wounds of Cæsar cried out before them, the populace was gradually led into an excited resentment of the deed of these “honourable men,” and when he ended, was ready for any mischief, and bitterly hostile to Brutus and Cassius. It was a triumph of intellectual craft and forceful oratory. He told them of the last will of Cæsar and that he had made the citizens his heirs, bequeathing to every man the sum of seventy-five drachmas, and in addition, that he had left his private arbours and new-planted orchards to Rome for ever. He brushed aside the charges made against Cæsar that he was ambitious, and questioned in most subtle fashion the honour of Brutus and the rest. He reserved his cleverest and most touching appeal to the last, when indeed he knew that he could now thrust the burning torch of his eloquence into the combustible natures of those who stood around. Pointing to the mantle of Cæsar he descended from the pulpit and stood beside the dead body. Holding up the blood-stained cloak he showed the light through many a rent and

gash. Thus he made the crowd realise the scene of the assassination. Then in solemn tones he said :

*“ If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.  
 You all do know this mantle : I remember  
 The first time ever Cæsar put it on ;  
 ’Twas on a summer’s evening, in his tent,  
 That day he overcame the Nervii :  
 Look, in this place ran Cassius’ dagger through :  
 See what a rent the envious Casca made :  
 Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb’d ;  
 And as he pluck’d his cursed steel away,  
 Mark how the blood of Cæsar follow’d it,  
 As rushing out of doors, to be resolved  
 If Brutus so unkindly knock’d, or no :  
 For Brutus, as you know, was Cæsar’s angel :  
 Judge, O you gods, how dearly Cæsar loved him !  
 This was the most unkindest cut of all ;  
 For when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,  
 Ingratitude, more strong than traitors’ arms,  
 Quite vanquish’d him : then burst his mighty heart ;  
 And, in his mantle muffling up his face,  
 Even at the base of Pompey’s statue,  
 Which all the while ran blood, great Cæsar fell.  
 O, what a fall was there, my countrymen !  
 Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,  
 Whilst bloody treason flourish’d over us.  
 O, now you weep, and I perceive you feel  
 The dint of pity : these are gracious drops.  
 Kind souls, what weep you when you but behold  
 Our Cæsar’s vesture wounded ? Look you here,  
 Here is himself, marr’d, as you see, with traitors.”*

As he unveiled the corpse a cry of horror, sympathy

anger, and revenge arose from the crowd. The spirit of mutiny and hate flamed out like a fire, and seizing lighted torches from the funeral pile they rushed in all directions to burn the houses of the assassins. Encountering a poet named Cinna, they tore him to pieces because he bore the name of one of the traitors. Brutus fled to Macedonia, Cassius to Syria, Decius Brutus to Gaul, and Lepidus marched his legions into the city and held Rome for Octavius and Antony. And now vengeance moved apace. Men who had aided the conspiracy were marked down for arrest and death, and soon armies were marching to Macedonia to overthrow Brutus and Cassius. Decius was besieged in Modena and afterwards slain. Cicero, although not one of the assassins, was killed by order of Antony, and an army of one hundred thousand men under the command of Antony and Octavius drove Brutus and Cassius near to the town of Philippi, in Macedonia. Sextus with a large fleet kept the sea and thus Brutus and his army were hemmed in between the mountains and the Mediterranean. Brutus, incensed because it was reported that Cassius was receiving rich bribes and withholding money from the troops, had a bitter quarrel with his friend. Cassius appealed to the love that he said existed between himself and Brutus, and offered him his dagger that Brutus might strike him to the heart.

“Sheathe your dagger,” said Brutus ;

*“Be angry when you will, it shall have scope :  
Do what you will, dishonour shall be humour.  
O Cassius, you are yoked with a lamb,  
That carries anger as the flint bears fire,*

*Who, much enforced, shows a hasty spark  
And straight is cold again."*

Brutus was now oppressed with many anxious forebodings; his wife Portia, distracted by her terrors, had committed suicide, and his sleep was ever disturbed by wild fancies and evil dreams. At night a ghost, bearing the semblance of the dead Julius Cæsar, had terrified him with a message that they should meet again at Philippi, thus prophesying the place where Brutus was to die. Cassius was anxious that the retreat into Philippi should not take place, but Brutus insisted that it was better to have a strong place to fight in than to be attacked on the plain. He reminded Cassius that Octavius and Antony were being strengthened every day by new arrivals :

*" You must note beside,  
That we have tried the utmost of our friends,  
Our legions are brimful, our cause is ripe :  
The enemy increaseth every day ;  
We, at the height, are ready to decline.  
There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune ;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat,  
And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures."*

And so, against his will, Cassius agreed to fall back upon the town of Philippi.

On the morning of the battle the rival chiefs held a parley and for the last time Brutus and Cassius stood

in the presence of Octavius and Antony. Their words to each other cut like knives and nothing was gained. On the contrary, the fierce conference provoked the bitterest recrimination and all knew that the battle would be one to the death. Great flocks of ravens, crows, and kites overshadowed the armies and wheeled in circles above the heads of Cassius and Brutus. It was the birthday of Cassius, but as he pointed to the birds of ill omen his thoughts and words were all of death. He stood face to face with Brutus and held out his hand in solemn farewell.

"This same day," said Brutus,

*"Must end that work the Ides of March begun ;  
And whether we shall meet again I know not.  
Therefore our everlasting farewell take.  
For ever, and for ever, farewell, Cassius !  
If we do meet again, why, we shall smile ;  
If not, why then this parting was well made."*

Cassius shook the hand his friend offered, and replied :

*"For ever, and for ever, farewell, Brutus !  
If we do meet again, we'll smile indeed ;  
If not, 'tis true this parting was well made."*

And thus, in sad parting, the two leaders separated to their respective commands, never to meet again in life. The battle raged fiercely on every hand, Antony directing the onset with impetuous gallantry on the one side, and Octavius with the caution of a veteran soldier leading his legions calmly on the other. The army of Cassius broke and fled, and Cassius, in despair, fell beneath the sword of his own armour-bearer, whom he directed to slay him when he saw that the battle

was lost. Brutus was also sorely pressed, his legions giving way at every point before the soldiers of Antony. At length he too determined to die, and unsheathing his sword, he fell upon it and perished by his own hand. Octavius and Antony rushed in as he was at the point of death, but it was too late to stay him. So died the noblest of all the conspirators, mourned in his death by Mark Antony and extolled by him as a great man, and by Octavius accorded all the rites and honours of a soldier's burial. Resting on his sword the future Augustus Cæsar said to Antony :

*“ According to his virtue let us use him,  
With all respect and rites of burial.  
Within my tent his bones to-night shall lie,  
Most like a soldier, order'd honourably.  
So call the field to rest, and let's away,  
To part the glories of this happy day.”*

## The Comedy of Errors

ONE fine day there sailed from the beautiful harbour of ancient Syracuse, in Sicily, a vessel which carried an industrious, clever merchant, named Ægeon. He was an enterprising man and had learned that in Epidamnum, a city across the seas, there were many opportunities for pushing a successful trade. Sailing by the Straits of Messina, where those terrors of the mariner in ancient days, Scylla and Charybdis, threatened to engulf the frail barks, Ægeon safely reached his desired haven, and in a short time built up a prosperous business. His wife and twin sons soon joined him, and brought with them two slaves, also twins, the children of parents who were too poor to support them. Curious to relate, each of the two sons of Ægeon bore the same name, Antipholus, for they were so much alike in feature and form and it was so difficult to distinguish between them that it seemed that one name would serve for both. And with the same idea the twin slaves, also so much alike that they could not be recognised apart, had been given the name of Dromio to bear in common. It seemed a very strange thing and likely to lead to confusion, but doubtless Ægeon thought he was

very ingenious in thus making two names serve for four boys.

After some time, his wife, Æmilia, desired to pay a visit to the old home in Syracuse, and Ægeon, proud of his twins, and willing to show them off in Sicily, agreed to make the voyage. But they had not gone far upon their course when misfortunes arose to trouble him, for the vessel was overtaken by a white squall, a violent tempest which bursts forth in the Mediterranean at certain seasons, giving no notice of its approach, as wild and pitiless as a starving tiger which leaps out of its jungle covert upon an unsuspecting traveller. The ship was hurled on the tops of the sea, and soon began to leak, her timbers being strained by the pressure of the cargo and the fury of the waves. The sailors strove to lighten her by casting out some of her stores, but soon it was apparent that nothing could save her. And then the crew, more careful of their own safety than the lives of their passengers, launched a boat, and left the vessel to her fate. Ægeon saw that there was little chance of rescue. Some spare masts lay on the deck, secured by fastenings of rope. The merchant took one of his sons and one of the infant slaves and bound them to one of the spars. He then tied his wife securely to the same mast. Raising the other spar he did the same to his other son and the other slave, and then bound himself with them. Thus they passed a dismal night, while the fierce wind and strong currents carried the ship, as they thought, towards Corinth.

On the morrow when the gale had passed, and the sun came out, the ill-fated passengers saw upon the tossing waves two vessels bearing down upon them. One was a ship of Corinth, the other of Epidaurus, both

busy ports in the eastern Mediterranean. At least so Ægeon thought, as he watched the vessels draw near. But ill-luck still pursued the unfortunate merchant, for his ship struck a hidden rock and in a few minutes all that was left of the craft were the two spars floating on the sea with their living freight lashed to them. That of the mother, being lighter than the mast to which Ægeon was tied, drifted rapidly away, and was picked up by the Corinthian boat. This proved to be a quick sailer and before the heavily laden vessel, which picked up Ægeon, could overtake her, she had vanished upon the horizon, and thus the merchant was bereft of wife and son and slave.

Many years passed away, and Antipholus and Dromio, master and servant in Syracuse, grew up into strong and graceful manhood. Nothing had been heard of the other castaways, but when Antipholus was about eighteen years of age he determined to set sail from Sicily and search the coast towns in order to discover, if possible, his mother and twin brother. Ægeon, who was now a wealthy man, was minded also to prosecute a search, and so for more than five years he wandered through Greece, crossing over the Ægean Sea, searching every island, and then down the coast of Asia Minor, to Smyrna, and finally to the bay near the great city of Ephesus. Deciding to make an earnest search through this magnificent city, he left the coast and walked up the glorious marble street which led to Ephesus from the sea. He could not have landed at a more inhospitable place, for unknown to him or forgotten in his anxiety, there existed a very cruel law of Ephesus directed against all traders from Syracuse. It had been enacted that there should be no trade between the

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two ports, and that any Syracusan who arrived in Ephesus should be imprisoned and fined heavily. If he could not pay the fine his life was to be forfeited.

Ægeon had not gone very far when some soldiers appeared, who immediately seized and bound him, and he was soon being dragged before Solinus, the great Duke of Ephesus. Much as the Duke sympathised with the unfortunate merchant, when he had heard his story, he said that he could not pardon him nor remit his fine. But Ægeon said that he had no money wherewith to pay so heavy an indemnity. The Duke said he would favour him to the extent of giving him a few hours' respite in order to find help :

*" I'll limit thee this day  
To seek thy life by beneficial help :  
Try all the friends thou hast in Ephesus ;  
Beg thou, or borrow, to make up the sum,  
And live ; if no, then thou art doom'd to die.  
Gaoler, take him to thy custody."*

And so the unfortunate man was hurried away, with death hanging like a cloud above him, to see if by a miracle he could come by the help he needed.

Now by a curious chance, his son Antipholus of Syracuse, with Dromio, his servant, after seven years' wandering, arrived in the city a few hours after poor Ægeon had been arrested. The young man knew a friendly merchant who warned him to conceal the fact that he was by birth a Syracusan, so it was given out that he was a wealthy merchant of Epidamnum. Antipholus received a large sum from the friendly Ephesian and promised to entertain him at five o'clock in the afternoon at his inn, the Centaur, one of the best-known

hostelries in the town. Dromio was told to take the money and lodge it safely at the inn and there wait for Antipholus, who intended to spend a few hours in the streets, to wander about and see the sights, to peruse the traders and gaze upon the buildings.

But now a stranger thing than all must be told. You would hardly think it, but the other twin and the other slave and even Æmilia, the wife of Ægeon, were also living in Ephesus and had been for many, many years. Duke Menaphon, the uncle of Duke Solinus of Ephesus, had brought the two lads to the city among his followers, and Æmilia, unknown to them, was now the Abbess of a famous nunnery not far from the city gates. Antipholus of Ephesus, as he was called, was married to the Lady Adriana, and well known to all the citizens as a wealthy, fashionable man. His slave Dromio of Ephesus was a witty, good-humoured servant, somewhat given to folly and to laughable mistakes. He sometimes had his head rapped for being stupid and mischievous. He was talkative and liked to gossip with his fellow servants, especially with one Luce, the fat cook, to whom he was making love.

Antipholus of Syracuse pursued his walk slowly down the street, muttering to himself as he went :

*“He that commends me to mine own content  
Commends me to the thing I cannot get.  
I to the world am like a drop of water,  
That in the ocean seeks another drop ;  
Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,  
Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself :  
So I, to find a mother and a brother,  
In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself.”*

He lifted his eyes from the ground and saw, as he thought, his slave Dromio, whom he had just now sent off in charge of all his money. His cheek was rather red, as if he had been smacked, and his hair was rough. There did not appear to be any money in his possession. This gave Antipholus a shock. The Ephesian Dromio recognised his own master, as he thought, and began, in a rather injured tone, to remind him that it was past dinner-time, and that his mistress was an impatient lady who was inclined to strike the hour of one or more upon her servant's cheek. Antipholus broke in upon his complaint, demanding what had been done with the money that he had but lately given into the hands of Dromio.

"You gave me nothing but sixpence last Wednesday, and that went to pay the saddler," said Dromio.

"Where is the gold, you knave," reiterated the angry Antipholus, "where is the thousand marks you had of me."

"I have some marks upon my pate," grumbled the servant, "and some upon my shoulders, from my mistress."

"What mistress?" demanded Antipholus.

"Your wife, now at the Phoenix, who waits for you to come to dinner, and prays that you will hie you home at once," returned Dromio.

His master lost his temper at this, and clouted Dromio across the ears. With a yell the servant darted off and disappeared down the street.

"Upon my life," said Antipholus, "by some device, the villain has been o'er-raught of all my money. They say that this is a strange town, full of dark sorcerers, disguised cheaters, mountebanks, and nimble jugglers.

If it prove so, I will be gone the sooner. I'll to the Centaur; I greatly fear my money is not safe." Meanwhile, the unfortunate Dromio of Ephesus sped hot-foot to his mistress at the Phoenix, where he poured out the story of his wrongs by the hands of his wrathful master. "He is stark mad, mistress," said he with a rueful face; "when I desired him to come home to dinner, he asked me for a thousand marks in gold. 'Tis dinner-time,' quoth I; 'My gold!' quoth he; 'Your meat doth burn,' quoth I; 'My gold!' quoth he; 'Will you come home?' quoth I; 'My gold!' quoth he, 'where is the thousand marks I gave thee, villain?' 'The pig,' quoth I, 'is burned'; 'My gold!' quoth he; 'My mistress, sir,' quoth I; 'Hang up thy mistress! I know not thy mistress; out on thy mistress!' "

"Quoth who?" interrupted Luciana, the sister of Adriana.

"Quoth my master," returned Dromio. "'I know,' quoth he, 'no house, no wife, no mistress.' "

Adriana was a little inclined to be jealous of Antipholus, and this action of her husband seemed to imply that she had lost his affection. When he had gone out in the morning he had promised her a handsome gold chain. He said that he would purchase it from the cleverest goldsmith in Ephesus and would rejoice to see it around the fair neck of his dear wife. Now Adriana felt sure that he was playing her false and that some other lady would receive the chain. "Since that my beauty cannot please his eye," she said in tearful accents to her sister, "I'll weep what's left away, and weeping die." But she did more than repine in solitude. She made up her mind to go into the city and

speak to Antipholus herself. And so she and her sister put on their walking attire and sallied forth. In the meantime Antipholus of Syracuse had hurried to the Centaur Inn, where he discovered to his astonishment that the gold was perfectly safe and that his servant Dromio had gone out to wander through the city to see the sights. Not far from the inn Antipholus discovered his own Dromio sauntering along, this time smart and happy-looking. Antipholus had not forgotten nor forgiven the trick played upon him by his servant, so he asked if Dromio had altered his mischievous humour in the short time which had intervened since their former encounter. But Dromio denied that he had met his master or said anything about mistress, or dinner, or the house of the Phoenix. Naturally, Antipholus was angered by the apparent untruthfulness, and losing his temper, he boxed Dromio's ears soundly and bade him observe his master's humours a little more closely, so that he might know when to play the fool.

As they stood bandying words, Adriana and Luciana came along the street. She thought, of course, that she saw her husband and his servant standing before her, and immediately addressed Antipholus in tender, beseeching words, calling him her dear husband, and saying that nothing ought to come between them :

*"How comes it now, my husband, O, how comes it,  
That thou art then estranged from thyself?  
Thyself I call it, being strange to me,  
That, undividable, incorporate,  
Am better than thy dear self's better part.  
Ah, do not tear thyself from me !*

*For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall  
A drop of water in the breaking gulf,  
And take unmingled thence that drop again,  
Without addition or diminishing,  
As take from me thyself, and not me too."*

Antipholus listened with growing amazement, and looked from one to the other, as though he thought that they were bewitched. Then he swore that he did not know the lady and had never cast eyes upon her before, that he had only been in Ephesus two hours.

"Fie, brother!" interposed Luciana, "how the world is changed with you. She sent for you by Dromio home to dinner."

The mention of Dromio made Antipholus swing round upon his servant, for he suspected him of again trying to play the fool. He remembered that Dromio had spoken about mistress—dinner—and the Phoenix. But now Dromio stoutly denied everything, and Antipholus knew not what to make of the matter. The end was that Adriana had her way, and escorted Antipholus to her house, where she commanded Dromio to keep the gate and deny admittance to every one.

"Sirrah," she said, "if any ask you for your master, say he dines forth, and let no creature enter. Dromio, play the porter well. Let none enter, lest I break your pate."

Poor Dromio settled down in the lodge, having barred the door securely, for he determined that his pate should not be broken, if he could possibly avoid it. Presently he heard footsteps outside, and a strong hand pushed the door. Then came a succession of heavy knocks. Dromio of Ephesus had found his

master in the city, and with his friends, Balthazar, a merchant, and Angelo, a goldsmith, he had hurried to his house of the Phoenix.

Upon meeting Antipholus, Dromio had asserted that his master had beaten him in the streets and charged him with misusing a thousand marks in gold. Antipholus denied that he had done so, but Dromio simply rubbed his own head and ears and said nothing. Angelo had been charged to prepare a lovely chain for Adriana, and Antipholus had invited his friends to dine with him at his house. He assured them that their welcome would be a warm one. "Small cheer and great welcome makes a merry feast," said Balthazar with a smile. The closed door, however, put a different aspect upon the matter. Dromio hammered on the panels and cried to the maidservants to open it at once. A man's voice told them to get off about their business. Dromio started, for he thought that his place of porter had been taken from him.

"Open," he shouted. "My master stays in the street."

"Let him walk from whence he came, lest he catch cold on his feet," was the reply.

Antipholus thought that this reply called for interference from himself, so he demanded the name of the porter.

"My name is Dromio—go away," was shouted through the door.

"O, the villain," said Dromio of Ephesus, "he hath stolen both mine office and my name." With that master and servant hammered more furiously on the door, whereupon Adriana, hearing the tumult, came and demanded the cause of it. The gentlemen out-

side recognised her voice, and her husband Antipholus cried out, "Are you there, wife? you might have come before."

Adriana replied scornfully, "Your wife, sir knave? go get you from the door."

Her furious husband immediately suspected some wrongdoing, and called for a crowbar with which to break open the door. But Balthazar entreated him not to make an uproar in so public a place and at such an hour, when all the passers-by would needs become acquainted with what looked like scandal and dishonour to the name of Antipholus. The vexed husband saw the wisdom of his advice, but he swore that he would be avenged upon Adriana. The hostess of the Porpentine was fair and jovial. She would know how to appreciate a handsome gold chain and Antipholus vowed that he would present it to her and thus flout his wife. In a towering rage he turned away and they sought the Porpentine. Meanwhile Adriana was not satisfied with the demeanour of the husband who sat with her at the dinner-table. He was cold in his manner, and seemed to be on his guard whenever she approached him. Luciana, her sister, noticed his behaviour, and when Adriana left the room, she spoke to Antipholus about his conduct, upbraiding him for his falseness to the wife who was devoted to him. But the Syracusan had all the while been entranced with the beauty of Luciana, for he had never seen so lovely a maid, and his impulsive Sicilian heart had fallen violently in love with her, as his confession to the lady showed :

*"It is thyself, mine own self's better part ;*

*Mine eye's clear eye, my dear heart's dearer heart.*

*My food, my fortune, and my sweet hope's aim,  
My sole earth's heaven, and my heaven's claim."*

Luciana started up in amazement, for she thought her brother-in-law was mad. The words which followed convinced her :

*"Thee will I love, and with thee lead my life :  
Thou hast no husband yet, nor I no wife.  
Give me thy hand."*

Luciana left the room hastily, saying that she would fetch her sister, and receive the expression of her good will. Just then, Dromio came into the room with a bewildered look on his face. "Do you know me, sir ? am I Dromio ? am I your man ? am I myself ?"

He might well ask the question, for the fat cook or kitchen wench, as he called her, had sworn that he had promised to marry her, and called upon him to keep his word. She was fat and slovenly, and not at all the kind of woman to take the fancy of Dromio, but she swore that if she did not have him no one else should.

*"As from a bear a man would run for life,  
So fly I from her that would be my wife,"*

said Dromio, and his terrified look showed that he spoke in all earnestness. Antipholus declared that it was time they both got away from this bewitched city, and directed Dromio to go down to the harbour, and arrange for a passage in any ship that might be sailing that night. No matter where its destination was, he bade him take passages for them both.

Shortly afterwards the goldsmith Angelo entered. He found no difficulty, for now the porch was unguarded.

In his hand he carried a long gold chain. "Master Antipholus," he said as he entered.

"Ay, that's my name," replied the Syracusan.

"Here is the chain you ordered. I thought to have given it to you at the Porpentine. You can give me the money for it at supper-time."

But Antipholus protested that he had never ordered it, and that he did not want it. Angelo refused to take it back.

"Then I pray you, sir," said Antipholus, "receive the money now, for fear you ne'er see chain nor money more."

"You are a merry man, sir," replied Angelo: "fare you well," and off he went, leaving Antipholus amazed.

*"I see a man here needs not live by shifts,  
When in the street he meets such golden gifts,"*

muttered the Syracusan as he made his way through the streets to the harbour. But Angelo had the ill-luck to meet a merchant, who was accompanied by a sheriff's officer. The goldsmith owed this merchant a long-standing account, and as the man was on the point of setting out on a journey to Persia, he demanded immediate payment, on pain of arrest in case of default. Angelo could not pay unless Antipholus of Ephesus, to whom he said he had just delivered a chain worth the amount of the debt, remitted him the account he owed. Just then Antipholus of Ephesus himself drew dear. He had been making merry, and was now somewhat quarrelsome. His abrupt dismissal from his own door by the wife he trusted still rankled in his mind, and he was in the act of sending off his Dromio, who accompanied him, to purchase

a rope's end, wherewith to punish her associates. The goldsmith gave a joyful cry when he perceived Antipholus, for as he had been offered the amount a short time before this he assumed that the debt would be immediately discharged. To his dismay his customer denied that he had received the chain.

"Come, come," said Angelo, "you know I gave it you even now. Give me the money which is my due, or I will attach you by this officer."

"What" cried Antipholus in wrath, "pay you for what I never had. Arrest me, foolish fellow, if thou darest."

The goldsmith was angry that his honour was thus questioned, and commanded the officer to lay hands upon Antipholus. At that moment Dromio of Syracuse came up and saluted his master, as he took him to be. "Master," said he, "there is a bark of Epidamnum that stays but till her owner comes aboard, and then she bears away. Our fraughtage sir, I have convey'd aboard; the merry wind blows fair from land; they stay for nought at all but for their owner, master, and yourself."

The officer tightened his grip upon the prisoner, for this looked like a planned evasion.

"Thou drunken slave," shouted Antipholus, now furious with anger. "I sent thee for a rope."

"Nay, sir, you sent me to the bay for a vessel."

Antipholus was too angry to debate the question. With a quick gesture of disdain he took a key from his pocket and told Dromio to go straight to Adriana with the key and tell her to unlock the desk which was covered with Turkish tapestry. She would there find a purse of ducats.

"Tell her," said he, "that I am arrested in the street, and the money is to bail me out."

The officer and Angelo now marched off with their prisoner, leaving Dromio standing perplexed in the street.

"Adriana, Adriana," he muttered, "why that is where we dined," and off he ran to the house of the Phoenix, and rushed breathless into the presence of Adriana and her sister, exclaiming that his master had been arrested in the street, dragged off to prison by one whose hard heart was buttoned up with steel, a fury, pitiless and rough.

This was ill news for Adriana, whose matrimonial troubles seemed to be increasing. The purse was found in the desk and handed to Dromio, who immediately set out to discover the prison.

In the meantime his true master, Antipholus of Syracuse, was sauntering leisurely down one of the principal streets. To his surprise merchants called him by his name, ladies bowed to him, and tradesmen came out of their shops to show him silks or clothing that they said he had ordered from them. "Sure," thought the Syracusan; "these are but wiles of the sorcerers who dwell in this perplexing city."

This musing was suddenly disturbed by sight of his own slave. Dromio gave a cry of delight at the unexpected vision of his master at liberty. In his hand he flourished a purse, well filled with coins called angels.

"Well, sir," said Antipholus. "How fortunèd you at the harbour? Is there any ship puts forth to-night? May we be gone?"

"Why, sir," replied Dromio, "I brought you word an hour since, that the bark *Expedition* put forth to-night: and then were you hindered by the sergeant,

to tarry for the hoy *Delay*. Here are the angels that you sent for to deliver you."

Antipholus only shook his head in pity.

"The fellow is distract, and so am I," said he, "and here we wander in illusions; some blessed power deliver us from hence." He was wearing the long gold chain which the goldsmith Angelo had made, and as the two walked along they met the hostess with whom Antipholus of Ephesus had been making merry.

"I see you have found the goldsmith now, Master Antipholus," said she. "Is that the chain you promised me to-day?"

She had a winning manner, and smiled with great roguery, as she pointed to the chain. She received a rude shock, however, when Antipholus exclaimed: "Satan, avoid! I charge thee, tempt me not, I conjure thee to leave me and be gone."

The lady was, of course, highly indignant, and demanded a diamond ring which she said she had exchanged with Antipholus on the promise of the gold chain. But the Syracusan hurried away, with a glance of abhorrence, and a cry of "Avaunt, thou witch."

"Verily," said the lady, "Antipholus is mad—I'll tell his wife that he broke into my house and took my ring by force." And she strutted away, filled with righteous indignation and a strong determination not to lose forty ducats, the price of her ring.

Meantime the unfortunate Antipholus of Ephesus proceeded with the officer towards the prison. Suddenly his eyes lighted up as he descried Dromio approaching, for in his heart he had feared that his wayward wife would not send the money for his release. To his dismay Dromio had nothing but a rope's end in his hand.

He was swinging it about with great gusto, as though he were thrashing the porter who had taken his place and name. "This, I warrant," said he with a chuckle, "will pay them all."

"But where's the money?" cried his master.

"Why, sir, I gave the money for the rope."

"Five hundred ducats, villain, for a rope," shouted his infuriated master, and with that he burst from the officer, seized the rope, and gave Dromio a thorough beating with it.

"You senseless villain!" he cried.

"I would that I were senseless, sir, that I might not feel your blows."

"Thou art sensible in nothing but blows, and so is an ass."

"I am an ass, indeed," said Dromio, rubbing his sides; "you may prove it by my long ears. I have served him from the hour of my nativity to this instant, and have nothing at his hands for my service but blows. When I am cold, he heats me with beating; when I am warm, he cools me with beating; I am waked with it when I sleep; raised with it when I sit; driven out of doors with it when I go from home; welcomed home with it when I return; nay, I bear it on my shoulders, and I think, when he hath lamed me, I shall beg with it from door to door." He paused, for he saw that while Antipholus had been beating him the lady Adriana, Luciana, and the merry hostess had drawn near, and were looking on with wonder. Accompanying them was a tall thin man, dressed as a magician. His name was Pinch, and he was a schoolmaster, a conjurer of evil spirits, a doctor, and above all, a kind of wonder-worker. The hostess said to Adriana, "Is not thy husband mad?"

Antipholus was, indeed, trembling with indignant rage.

Said Pinch, in a pompous tone, "Give me your hand, and let me feel your pulse." The Ephesian clouted him across the ear and said, "There is my hand, and let it feel your ear." The doctor staggered back and rubbed his ear. Then he drew himself up, and in a majestic tone, said :

*"I charge thee, Satan, housed within this man,  
To yield possession to my holy prayers,  
And to thy state of darkness hie thee straight :  
I conjure thee by all the saints in heaven."*

But Antipholus shouted that he was not mad, although he feared he soon would be if more of this fooling went on. Turning to his wife he complained that she had denied him entrance to his own house.

"O husband," cried Adriana, "God doth know you dined at home."

"Dined at home ! Dromio, thou villain, what sayest thou. Were not my doors locked up, and I shut out. Did she not revile me there ?"

"Perdie," said Dromio, "your doors were locked, and you were shut out, and, certes, she reviled you there."

"And you," continued Antipholus, pointing his finger at his wife, "you suborned the goldsmith to arrest me, and sent no money to redeem me."

"I did," returned his wife ; "and Luciana knows it. I sent the money by the hands of Dromio here."

"God and the rope-maker bear me witness," cried the unfortunate servant ; "that I was sent for nothing but a rope."

"Mistress," said Pinch, as he signalled to some three

or four stout fellows who lurked near ; “ both man and master are possessed ; I know it by their pale and deadly looks ; they must be bound and laid in some dark room. The fiend is strong within them.”

The men seized Dromio, and then laid hands upon his master, whereat the officer intervened, saying that Antipholus was in his custody ; but Adriana said that she would pay the debt on condition that her husband was bound securely and conveyed to his house. Despite all his frantic struggles, Antipholus was seized and bound, and Pinch and his myrmidons dragged him away.

“ What is his debt ? ” said Adriana to the officer.

“ Two hundred ducats, madam, to one Angelo for a gold chain.”

“ He did bespeak a chain for me,” she said, “ but had it not.”

“ Yes, he had,” corrected the hostess, “ for I did see it on him to-day.”

Just then Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio, his servant, came along the street with their rapiers in their hands. Adriana and the others thought that it was her husband broken loose from Pinch. They screamed in terror and rushed away, the street resounding with their cries.

“ I see these witches are afraid of swords,” said the Syracusan with a smile. “ Let us away, and get our stuff aboard. I long to be away safe and sound.” They hurried along in the direction of the harbour, passing on their left a Priory, with heavy gates and high walls. Here they encountered the merchant bound for Persia, and Angelo, the goldsmith. “ There is the self-same chain,” said Angelo. “ Signior Antipholus, I wonder much that you have put me to this shame and trouble.

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It is a scandal to yourself. Can you now deny you had this chain from me ? ”

“ I never did deny it,” said Antipholus.

One word led to another, and the dispute ended with the drawing of swords, and soon Antipholus and the merchants were engaged in a fierce struggle. Adriana and her sister had followed them at a safe distance, and now tried to separate the angry combatants. Some men with her seized Antipholus, and dragged his sword from his hand.

“ Run, master, run,” shouted Dromio ; “ this is a Priory ; in or we are spoiled.”

The great door swung open and the Syracusans darted within. As the Ephesians tried to follow, the stately figure of the Lady Abbess barred their way.

“ Be quiet, people,” she said. “ Wherefore throng you hither ? ”

“ To fetch my poor distracted husband hence,” said Adriana ; “ let us come in, that we may bind him fast, and bear him home for his recovery.”

And then she told the Abbess that Antipholus had allowed his love for her to wander to unworthy objects, that she had often reprehended him for his behaviour, and ceased not, night nor day, to tell him that his conduct was vile and bad.

“ And thereof came it that the man was mad,” said the Abbess ;

*“ The venom clamours of a jealous woman  
Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.  
It seems his sleeps were hinder'd by thy railing :  
And thereof comes it that his head is light.  
Thou say'st his meat was sauced with thy upbraidings :*

*Unquiet meals make ill digestions ;  
Thereof the raging fire of fever bred ;  
And what's a fever but a fit of madness ?  
Thou say'st his sports were hinder'd by thy brawls :  
Sweet recreation barr'd, what doth ensue  
But moody and dull melancholy,  
Kinsman to grim and comfortless despair ;  
And at her heels a huge infectious troop  
Of pale distemperatures and foes to life ?  
In food, in sport, and life-preserving rest  
To be disturb'd, would mad or man or beast."*

She would not allow Adriana to enter the Priory, and the offended wife protested that she would appeal to Duke Solinus.

From the towers the bells now boomed out the hour of five, and a procession was seen drawing near the Priory. At the head of it marched the Duke, attended by a train of officials. In the centre of the procession, preceded by the grim-looking figure of the public executioner with a sharp axe upon his shoulder, there marched a bare-headed old man. It was Ægeon, the unfortunate Syracusan merchant. He had failed to procure the amount of his redemption, and was being led out to die. Adriana cast herself upon her knees before the Duke, and begged him to compel the Abbess to release her husband. She told her story with a winning pathos, and the Duke bade one of his officers summon the Abbess before him. As the soldier knocked a servant was seen running to Adriana.

*" O mistress, mistress, shift and save yourself !  
My master and his man are both broke loose,  
Beaten the maids a-row, and bound the doctor,*

*Whose beard they have singed off with brands of fire ;  
And ever, as it blazed, they threw on him  
Great pails of puddled mire to quench the hair :  
My master preaches patience to him, and the while  
His man with scissors nicks him like a fool."*

"Peace, man," cried Adriana, pointing to the Priory ;  
"thy master and his man are here."

There was a noise of shouting, the guard closed round the Duke and levelled their halberds, as two wild-looking figures came running along the road. It was Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio his slave.

"Ah me," cried out Adriana ; "it is my husband ! Witness you, that he is borne about invisible ; even now we housed him in the Abbey here ; and now he's there, past thought of human reason."

As Antipholus cast himself before the Duke, the condemned merchant gave a cry of surprise, and then became silent, for he feared that a recognition would bring his son under the same condemnation that he was suffering. "Unless the fear of death doth make me dote," he muttered, "I see my son Antipholus and Dromio."

Antipholus charged his wife with conspiring against him, and told the Duke all his adventures on this eventful day. How that the goldsmith had sworn he had delivered a chain to him, and had had him arrested for the debt. How that a needy, hollow-eyed, sharp-looking wretch, a hungry, lean-faced villain and mountebank, called Pinch, had declared him to be mad and cast him bound into a dank and darkish vault, from which he had escaped by gnawing, with his teeth, his bonds asunder. The goldsmith swore, however, that Antipholus had received the chain, and that others had seen

it hanging on his neck. Adriana and Luciana swore that he had dined at home. And the merchant averred that he had a few minutes back darted into the Abbey.

"You lie," cried Antipholus; "I never came within these Abbey walls; nor ever didst thou draw thy sword on me; I never saw the chain, so help me Heaven!"

The Duke did not know what to think, but gave orders to summon the Abbess. Before she arrived Ægeon considered that the time had come for him to make an attempt to save his life.

"Most mighty Duke," he said, "vouchsafe me speak a word. Haply I see a friend will save my life, and pay the sum that may deliver me."

"Speak freely, what thou wilt."

The old man turned to the Ephesian:

"Is not your name, sir, called Antipholus, and is not that your bondman, Dromio? Why do you look strange upon me? You know me well."

He looked eagerly upon the man he thought to be his Syracusan son, and waited for his reply. He was crushed when the words came: "I never saw you in my life till now. I do not know your face, neither have I heard your voice."

"Not know my voice!" wailed the poor old man, stricken to the heart by this callous treachery on the part of a son.

*"Not know my voice! O time's extremity,  
Hast thou so crack'd and splitt'd my poor tongue  
In seven short years, that here my only son  
Knows not my feeble key of untuned cares?  
Though now this grained face of mine be hid*

*In sap-consuming winter's drizzled snow,  
And all the conduits of my blood froze up,  
Ye' hath my night of life some memory,  
My wasting lamps some fading glimmer left,  
My dul' deaf ears a little use to hear :  
Al! these old witnesses—I cannot err—  
Tell me thou art my son Antipholus."*

He stretched out his hands with piteous entreaty ; but Antipholus replied, " I never saw my father in my life."

" But seven years since, in Syracuse, boy, thou know'st we parted."

" No," interposed the Duke, " I have known him these twenty years, during which time he never saw Syracuse. I see thy age and dangers make thee dote."

The great door of the Priory swung open at this moment, and the Abbess was seen with Antipholus of Syracuse and his Dromio standing by her side. Ægeon stared in wonder, and Adriana cried out, " I see two husbands, or mine eyes deceive me." Both men recognised the aged father Ægeon, and Antipholus greeted him with a cheery word. Luciana blushed crimson and cast her eyes upon the ground.

" Most mighty Duke, behold a man much wronged," said the Abbess, and then she declared herself to be Æmilia, the long-lost wife of Ægeon, the merchant of Syracuse. She told how she had been separated from the children which were saved with her, and how in despair she had secluded herself within the Priory. It was by a wonderful Providence that her husband and both sons had now been restored to her. Such a revelation astonished every one, but it delighted old Ægeon beyond measure. He thought he had lost everything,



faced youth. We came into the world like brother and brother, and now let's go hand in hand, not one before another."

So, very happily, this Comedy of Errors ended, but I think that it would be wise in future for parents to give their twins different names, and to tie a ribbon upon them if they cannot distinguish them apart.

# Romeo and Juliet

**I**N Verona, where the River Adige sweeps round the rocky eminence, upon which, perched high above the Lombard plains, stands the strong old fortress castle of St. Peter, there lived, many centuries ago, two great and wealthy families called the Montagues and the Capulets. A bitter feud divided them. Not only was the quarrel maintained fiercely by the highest members of the families, but even the lowest scullions and kitchen-servants took sides, and whenever or wherever either met any of the opposing faction, there was much biting of thumbs, tossing of caps, frowning of brows, muttering of threats, and drawing of weapons. Quarrels were of daily occurrence and the narrow streets of Verona resounded with the clash of steel, the shouts of infuriated combatants and the groans of wounded men.

The ruler of Verona at this time was Prince Escalus, a man of very distinguished family. He was a soldier and statesman of proved ability, and wielded great authority among the Veronese, but even his power could not stamp out the riots and turmoils of the factious clans.

The old Lord Capulet had a lovely daughter, named Juliet, who was acknowledged by all who knew her to

headed youth. We came into the world like brother and brother, and now let's go hand in hand, not one before another."

So, very happily, this Comedy of Errors ended, but I think that it would be wise in future for parents to give their twins different names, and to tie a ribbon upon them if they cannot distinguish them apart.

# Romeo and Juliet

**I**N Verona, where the River Adige sweeps round the rocky eminence, upon which, perched high above the Lombard plains, stands the strong old fortress castle of St. Peter, there lived, many centuries ago, two great and wealthy families called the Montagues and the Capulets. A bitter feud divided them. Not only was the quarrel maintained fiercely by the highest members of the families, but even the lowest scullions and kitchen-servants took sides, and whenever or wherever either met any of the opposing faction, there was much biting of thumbs, tossing of caps, frowning of brows, muttering of threats, and drawing of weapons. Quarrels were of daily occurrence and the narrow streets of Verona resounded with the clash of steel, the shouts of infuriated combatants and the groans of wounded men.

The ruler of Verona at this time was Prince Escalus, a man of very distinguished family. He was a soldier and statesman of proved ability, and wielded great authority among the Veronese, but even his power could not stamp out the riots and turmoils of the factious clans.

The old Lord Capulet had a lovely daughter, named Juliet, who was acknowledged by all who knew her to

be the most beautiful damsel in Verona. She stood just on the verge of womanhood, and, despite her youth, her nature was such that it only required the awakening touch of a great Love to arouse it to the noblest and sweetest life. She lived in the old palace of the Capulets with her parents and was tended by a faithful but garrulous old nurse.

The heads of the opposite faction, Lord and Lady Montague, had one son, named Romeo ; a young man whose great intellectual ability and unfailing courtesy of manner had won him many friends. Not among the Capulets, of course, for enmity had so embittered the relations of the two houses that friendship between them was impossible, and this enmity was being continually added to by the daily quarrels. Such a condition of things promised an ill-reaping when the time of harvest came, for the shedding of civil blood makes civil hands unclean, and ancient grudge breaks out in new mutiny.

One morning before the clock had struck the hour of nine, two armed servitors of the house of Capulet were sauntering along a street in Verona. They talked of the feud, and how much they hated the Montagues, and spoke in louder tones when they perceived two of the hated faction approaching. Soon they began to insult the new-comers, by frowning and handling their weapons.

"Do you bite your thumb at us, sir," called out one of the Montagues. He received a reply which incensed him beyond measure, and in a few minutes the four men were cutting and thrusting at each other in a deadly, furious struggle. Suddenly their swords were knocked up by a gentleman of rank, Benvolio,

nephew to the Lord Montague, who called on them to sheathe their weapons and keep the peace.

Benvolio was a man of steady, even temper, and had a calm disposition which was not easily aroused, but yet he was a brave man and knew well how to defend his life and the honour of his house. It did not appear to him to be seemly that the quarrel of noble houses should descend to the strife of servants. As he tried to part the fighters, a quick step was heard, and a richly dressed man flung himself into the group. It was Tybalt, the nephew of Lady Capulet, a blustering swashbuckler whose natural bad temper had been irritated to fury in the course of the strife between the clans. He loved broils and quarrels, and frankly confessed that he hated peace almost as much as he hated the Montagues. He had unsheathed his sword as he ran, and immediately attacked Benvolio with such vigour that the latter was hard put to it to ward off the vengeful blows aimed at him. As he defended himself, others of both houses dashed up to join the fray. The citizens, aroused from their avocations, seized their weapons and rushed into the streets, and soon the whole city was in an uproar. Even Lord Capulet and Lord Montague were drawn to the struggle, and presently the steady tramp of armed men showed that this quarrel, begun by a couple of servants, had called the highest in Verona to quell it. Prince Escalus, with his guards, beat down the weapons and tried to force the combatants apart. For a time his efforts were ineffectual, for rage had taken complete possession of the furious opponents, but at length their swords and daggers were knocked out of their hands, and the breathless men sullenly gave way to the

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voice of authority and fell back from each other's throats.

"Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace," exclaimed Prince Escalus angrily, "throw your mistempered weapons to the ground. Stand apart, I charge you. If ever you disturb our streets again, your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace. You, Capulet, come with me; and Montague, come you this afternoon to know our further pleasure in this case. For the rest, on pain of death, let every man depart."

His words were those of the ruler of Verona, and could not be gainsaid. Frowning defiance and muttering threats of future vengeance, the Capulets followed Prince Escalus, and Lord Montague was left with his kinsmen.

Romeo had not appeared at the fight, because of late he had been given to solitary wanderings and communings with himself in the famous sycamore grove which was near the bank of the river. There he used to pace under the trees, avoiding all companionship, and spending the time in sadness and deep thought. This mood gave his father considerable concern, and questioning Benvolio as to the origin of the brawl the conversation turned to the subject of Romeo, and Benvolio promised Lord Montague to find out the secret of his son's disquiet. As they talked, Romeo himself drew near. His face was sad-looking, and his dress careless. Benvolio, with gentle tact, drew him into conversation, and soon discovered, what he had before suspected, that Romeo was in love. It was with the Lady Rosaline, a famous beauty of Verona and a friend of the Capulets.

"Ah, Benvolio," said the love-sick Romeo, "griefs

of mine own lie heavy on my breast. I am in love. Dost thou not laugh ? ”

“ No, good coz, I rather weep at thy good heart’s oppression.”

“ Why, such is love’s transgression,” replied Romeo.

*“ Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs ;  
Being purg’d, a fire sparkling in lovers’ eyes ;  
Being vex’d, a sea nourish’d with lovers’ tears :  
What is it else ? a madness most discreet,  
A choking gall, and a preserving sweet.”*

Benvolio knew the Lady Rosaline, and did not share the high opinion concerning her expressed by Romeo, but he wisely said nothing in her dispraise. Now, as it happened, the Lady Rosaline had been invited to a feast which was being given by Lord Capulet on the occasion of the entry of his daughter, Juliet, into society. It was to be a feast and a masked ball, to which all the gentlefolk of Verona were to be invited, with the exception, of course, of the Montagues. Lord Capulet had arranged that the young and rich Count Paris, a kinsman of Prince Escalus, should have an opportunity at the ball of seeing and making love to the Lady Juliet. Paris had already received the father’s consent to make the lady his wife, if Juliet agreed, and it was hoped by all the Capulets that the marriage would be finally arranged at the ball. Lady Capulet and the nurse had also done their utmost to fill the mind of Juliet with thoughts of the Count. They pictured him as the flower of the youth of the city, and with glowing words described his many excellent qualities. Lady Capulet made a very eloquent speech about him :

*"Verona's summer hath not such a flower  
What say you? can you love the gentleman?  
This night you shall behold him at our feast:  
Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,  
And find delight writ there with beauty's pen;  
Examine every several lineament,  
And see how one another lends content;  
And what obscur'd in this fair volume lies,  
Find written in the margent of his eyes.  
This precious book of love, this unbound lover,  
To beautify him, only lacks a cover:  
The fish lives in the sea; and 'tis much pride,  
For fair without the fair within to hide.  
That book in many's eyes doth share the glory  
That in gold clasps locks in the golden story."*

Juliet, however, was yet heart-whole, and could only give a promise that she would study the Count, and perhaps admire.

As all the gentlefolk of Verona were to be invited to the ball, many servants were sent out to deliver the invitations, and, as it happened, one of these, a man who could not read, accosted Romeo and Benvolio in the street and asked their guidance, so that he might deliver his cards. Thus they learned the names of many of the guests, and discovered that the Lady Rosaline would be present. At once an idea was suggested to Benvolio, and when the servant had withdrawn, he mentioned it to Romeo. It was, that Romeo, with a party of the Montagues, should go masked and disguised to the ball. There he would behold so many of the most admired beauties of Verona that Benvolio felt assured that Romeo's passion for Rosaline would vanish.

Therefore he said :

*“ Go thither, and with unattainted eye,  
Compare her face with some that I shall show,  
And I will make thee think thy swan a crow.”*

Accordingly, at nightfall, Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio, with other members of their faction, disguised and masked, set out for the scene of festivity. Mercutio was a light-hearted gallant, witty, audacious, mischievous, and brilliant. Brave almost to rashness, and ready for any enterprise, his sword was easily unsheathed, but he was not naturally of a quarrelsome disposition. He hated folly and pretentious bluster, and always expressed his contempt for those “ who stand so much on the new form that they cannot sit at ease on the old bench.” He possessed great powers of imagination, and was able to express his thoughts in language of a highly poetical nature. Like most of the Veronese he had a fiery temper, and was easily aroused, but he was a favourite with all his companions, and especially beloved by Romeo and Benvolio. The midnight escapade in disguise and in the very house of the Capulets suited his adventurous disposition, and roused him to a state of great excitement. He rallied his comrades and jested with Romeo as they made their way along the shadowed streets. Romeo, however, felt a weight of misgiving pressing in on his heart ; for somehow, the expedition seemed to him to have a sombre threatening in it and he could not stifle his fears :

*“ I fear too early, for my mind misgives,  
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,  
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date*

*With this night's revels ; and expire the term  
Of a despised life, clos'd in my breast,  
By some vile forfeit of untimely death :  
But He, that hath the steerage of my course,  
Direct my sail."*

Mercutio laughed at his fears, and at the dream which Romeo said had troubled him. "Queen Mab, I see, has been with you," he said, and then he launched into a very poetical description of the vagaries of the Fairy Queen :

*"She comes*

*In shape no bigger than an agate-stone  
On the forefinger of an alderman,  
Drawn with a team of little atomies  
Over men's noses as they lie asleep :  
Her waggon-spokes made of long spinners' legs ;  
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers ;  
The traces, of the smallest spider's web ;  
The collars, of the moonshine's watery beams ;  
Her whip, of cricket's bone ; the lash, of film :  
Her waggoner, a small grey-coated gnat,  
Not half so big as a round little worm  
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid.  
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut,  
Made by the joiner squirrel, or old grub,  
Time out of mind the fairies' coach-makers.  
And in this state she gallops night by night  
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love :  
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on court'sies straight :  
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees :  
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream :  
Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,*

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And then dreams he of smelling at a mill  
And sometime comes she with a taffy-sweet will  
Tickling a parson's nose with her white wings  
Then dreams he of another banquet  
Sometime she driveth him with a bodkin's point  
And then dreams he of meeting under the moon  
Of breaches, ambuscades, Spanish Fling,  
Of healths five fathom deep, and then anon  
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and flies;  
And, being thus frighted, swears a prayer to sleep  
And sleeps again."

Romeo interrupted him with a heavy sigh and said, "Peace, peace! Verily, these are dreams of nothing."

"True," replied his friend with a heavy sigh.

"I talk of dreams

Which are the children of an idle brain,

Begot of nothing but vain fancies,

Which is as thin of substance as the air

And more inconstant than the wind on water,

Even now the frozen bosom of the river

And, being anger'd, doth as soon unthaw

Turning his face to the sun-beams' heat

Thus the witty Mercutio began. As they were talking they arrived at the brilliantly lighted mansion of the Capulets. It was a magnificent palace with large orchards and gardens where fountains gushed and marble statues gleamed white in the moonlight; where tall and ancient cypresses, the grave and stern of centuries, stood like tall sentinels over the groves and thick groves of tropical plants made the night air fragrant with delicious perfume. Lights gleamed in the

walks, and laughter rippled like music from unseen lovers who strolled through the fairyland of flowers. Within the palace richly dressed cavaliers trod the long corridors and polished floors, and beautiful ladies of highest rank, clad in richest silks, and blazing with jewels, made the great ballroom like the scene of a poet's dream. Some were masked, but many had chosen to dispense with disguise, and moved among the brilliant throng, jesting and laughing with their friends.

Romeo and his companions mingled with the crowd, the presence of the hated Montagues being unsuspected, until the fierce Tybalt heard a voice which sent a thrill of excitement through his breast. It was the voice of Romeo, and Tybalt recognised it on the instant. He started and felt for his rapier, and would have plunged the ballroom into mad strife had not Lord Capulet restrained him with an angry whisper. He said that no brawling should mar the happiness of the occasion, and that Romeo was comporting himself like a true gentleman. Muttering curses beneath his breath the vengeful Tybalt turned on his heel and left the palace.

Romeo had seen the Lady Rosaline in the room, but he had no eyes for her now, and all his former passion faded at the sight of the surpassing loveliness of a lady who stood near the centre of the room. It was the Lady Juliet, although he did not know it. He felt his heart drawn out to her, and realised that he had never seen true beauty until that moment, and all his powers of love were enkindled by the glance of her eye and the sweet words which fell from her lips. He was enraptured by her grace as she stepped through the mazes of the dance, hand in hand with a knightly kinsman of high degree. He said aloud :

*“ O ! she doth teach the torches to burn bright.  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear ;  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear ! ”*

It was these words which had reached the ear of Tybalt, filling him with jealous rage, and sending him out into the night, breathing threats of vengeance.

On her part, Juliet had noticed the masked cavalier whose burning eyes seemed to read her soul. Her heart beat as he drew near and took her hand. They did not dance, but walked together to a quiet part of the room, where they conversed for some time in low tones. It was love at first sight, and in a moment love, deep, constant, and enduring was born within their hearts. Their conversation was interrupted by a message to Juliet from her mother. Then it was that Romeo discovered from the nurse that the fair unknown was none other than the daughter of the Lord of the hated Capulets, and Juliet, too, learnt that she had given her heart to a Montague, the only son of her father’s greatest enemy. It was an awakening that promised dire results, and yet neither regretted the meeting, and would not, for the world, have recalled the love silently given to each other.

When the ball ended, and the guests had all departed, Juliet retired to her room, but not to sleep. Her thoughts were too much excited by the events of the evening. She sat upon the balcony which overlooked the garden. It was a perfect night. The moon shone clearly in the unclouded beautiful Italian sky, and tipped with silver the tops of the trees. Somewhere in the distance a light hand touched the strings of a guitar,

and faint sounds of music came stealing on the quiet air. For awhile Juliet sat in silence, absorbed in the beauty of the lovely night, and in the joy of her love. But as she recalled the enmity which existed between the houses of Capulet and Montague, she sighed :

*“ O Romeo, Romeo ! wherefore art thou Romeo ?  
Deny thy father, and refuse thy name :  
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,  
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.”*

Unknown to her, there lurked behind a bush in the garden, a man who heard her lightest word. It was Romeo, who, leaving his companions, had scaled the wall of the garden, in order that he might still be near the object of his love. He saw the light in her room, and watched her as she stood on the balcony. Breathlessly he listened to her words :

*“ 'Tis but thy name, that is my enemy :  
Thou art thyself though, not a Montague.  
What's Montague ? it is nor hand nor foot,  
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O ! be some other name.  
What's in a name ? that which we call a rose,  
By any other word would smell as sweet ;  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes,  
Without that title.—Romeo, doff thy name ;  
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,  
Take all myself ! ”*

At this sweet confession, Romeo could keep silence no longer, and revealed himself to Juliet. With impassioned words, he pleaded the intensity of his love.

He said that he would dare all, forget everything, lose everything, for her sake ; sail to the farthest sea, give up his name and house, and think himself enriched beyond all measure if he could but call Juliet his wife. She had been startled by his appearance in the garden, and shamed that her frank avowals of love had been overheard, but her innocent modesty had not gone beyond a true woman's confession, and in her heart Juliet rejoiced that she was beloved by Romeo, and that he knew that his love was reciprocated. With many loving words he pressed her to become his wife upon the morrow. Time was nothing to them, in the love which bore all before it as a strong stream carries straws upon its bosom. The circumstances also called for haste. Count Paris desired to win the lady, and Tybalt had a fiery soul, which loved revenge. Juliet promised Romeo that she would let him have her word upon the morrow, but as she did so, the dark shadow of the enmity between their families crept across the sunlight of her thoughts and made her shudder with an undefinable dread. It was a rash, unadvised, sudden love, and yet she felt that she could not draw back, nor break the tie which bound her to her lover, even though he were the enemy of her house. Her eyes filled with tears as she thought, that for good or ill, her life was bound up with that of Romeo. Her love made her bold, and she felt she could dare the world so long as she possessed the heart of Romeo.

*" My bounty is as boundless as the sea,  
My love as deep ; the more I give to thee,  
The more I have, for both are infinite."*

The morn was now breaking, the soft moonlight had faded gently into the warm glow of the coming sunrise,

the eastern clouds were chequered with streaks of light, and the world was awakening to the beauties of a new day.

With tender words the lovers parted and Romeo sought the cell of an aged Friar, who was his friend, in order to arrange the details of his hoped-for speedy marriage. His plan was that Juliet should join him at the cell of Friar Laurence, a quiet, secluded place, and there the marriage ceremony could be celebrated without much fear of interruption. The Friar was already busy in his garden, plucking flowers and choosing certain herbs. He was a skilful botanist, and knew how to extract perfumes and poisons from his plants. He moved about the garden, in the early morning light, with the discerning care of one who has a fellowship with the growing world of Nature. As Romeo drew near he heard the Friar say :

*O ! mickle is the powerful grace that lies  
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities :  
For nought so vile that on the earth doth live,  
But to the earth some special good doth give ;  
Nor aught so good, but, strain'd from that fair use,  
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse :  
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,  
And vice sometime 's by action dignified.  
Within the infant rind of this weak flower  
Poison hath residence, and medicine power :  
For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part :  
Being tasted, slays all senses with the heart.  
Two such opposed kings encamp them still  
In man as well as herbs,—grace, and rude will ;  
And where the worser is predominant,  
Full soon the canker death eats up that plant."*

The Friar loved Romeo, and heard his story with interest, promising to marry the pair at the hour decided upon by the ardent lover. The time being fixed Romeo hurried to the street which led to his home. Mercutio and Benvolio were awaiting him, with news that a challenge had been sent by Tybalt. They had searched vainly for Romeo, being more anxious, perhaps, concerning the challenge than for his safety. As he stood in conversation with his comrades Romeo saw the nurse approaching, and after some merry quips at her expense Mercutio and Benvolio turned away.

First prudently making sure that she was addressing Romeo, the nurse told him that she bore a message from her young mistress, and he confided to her, in return, the hour and place of the marriage, as arranged. Meanwhile, Juliet waited impatiently the return of her aged messenger.

*"O! she is lame: love's heralds should be thoughts,  
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams  
Driving back shadows over lowering hills."*

At last Juliet learned of the plan which her lover had contrived, and ere long had made her way to the cell of Friar Laurence, where she found Romeo waiting and where without loss of time the Friar united them in the sacred bond of marriage.

Then with happy hearts they separated, telling each other that it would not be for long.

The city lay bathed in sunshine on this bright day, and Verona's streets were crowded with gentlemen and citizens. Benvolio saw that many of the Capulets were abroad, and anxious to avoid disturbance and any breach of the edict of the Prince, he advised

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Mercutio to withdraw with him to a quieter part. Mercutio was in a merry mood and jested with his friend, calling him a hot-blood and a brawler, one who would be the first to rush impetuously into a disturbance. For his part, he said, he was always a man of peace, and one of the last to seek a quarrel.

"As for you," he continued with a smile, "thou wilt quarrel with a man that hath a hair more, or a hair less, in his beard, than thou hast. Thou wilt quarrel with a man for cracking nuts, having no other reason, but because thou hast hazel eyes. Thy head is as full of quarrels as an egg is full of meat: and yet thy head hath been beaten as addle as an egg for quarrelling. Thou hast quarrelled with a man for coughing in the street, because he hath wakened thy dog that hath lain asleep in the sun. Didst thou not fall out with a tailor for wearing his new doublet before Easter? with another, for tying his new shoes with old riband? and yet thou wilt tutor me from quarrelling!"

Benvolio's honest face showed some astonishment as Mercutio thus jested at his peaceful disposition, but he smiled in answer to the merry laugh of his friend. The warm sunshine cheered them both, and Mercutio, most light-hearted of men, little suspected that a dark storm was ready to burst over his head, and that Death had almost placed his cold finger upon his heart.

While the friends pursued their walk with peaceable intent, Tybalt approached with other gentlemen of the Capulet faction, frowning and bustling as was his wont. His greeting soon aroused bitter retorts, and at the height of the dispute Romeo came walking along the street. The wrath of Tybalt now found its object, and Romeo was assailed with cutting words.

"Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford no better term than this—thou art a villain."

To the astonishment of Mercutio, Romeo returned gentle words to the calculated provocation of his enemy. His marriage with Juliet had changed his foes to friends and for his part he determined that nothing should tempt him to draw his sword against Tybalt. But Mercutio, who knew nothing of the marriage, could not bear this seeming cowardice on the part of Romeo; he called it a vile and dishonourable submission, and drew his sword. Romeo tried to stay his hand, but Tybalt, ever ready for conflict, crossed blades with him, and in an instant the two were engaged in a fierce duel. Romeo called on Benvolio to separate them, and himself pushed near Mercutio. Like a flash of light the sword of Tybalt darted forward, and Mercutio cried out and fell to the ground. As he staggered, Tybalt was hurried away by his friends.

"Courage, Mercutio," cried Romeo, "thy hurt cannot be much."

All had passed so quickly that he could hardly realise that a deadly thrust had been given.

"No," gasped Mercutio, "'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve: ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a grave man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world.—A plague o' both your houses. Help me into some house, Benvolio, or I shall faint.—A plague o' both your houses."

He staggered to his feet and reeled across the pavement. Benvolio carried him within a doorway, but returned after a few minutes.

"O Romeo, Romeo!" he cried in anguish, "leave

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Mercutio's dead; that gallant spirit hath aspir'd the clouds, which too untimely here did scorn the earth."

As Romeo started back in dismay, the furious Tybalt rushed in again, his sword, wet with the blood of Mercutio, unsheathed in his hand. In an instant the desire to avenge Mercutio swept all thought of Juliet out of the mind of her husband. For a time vengeance blotted out love. The two enemies encountered each other with bitterest hate, and Tybalt had to give way. Romeo fought as one who would not spare, and Tybalt as one who fights for his life. The sound of running feet showed them that the city was aroused, and soon the retainers of the Prince were seen forcing their way to the scene of the encounter. Romeo saw that he must make haste. Giving a quick thrust he forced his opponent against the wall, and drove his weapon through his breast. With a cry Tybalt fell upon the pavement. Romeo leaped aside from the levelled halberds of the Prince's guards, and darted down the street. Benvolio was seized and taken before Prince Escalus. He concealed nothing and told the story of Mercutio's death, the return of Tybalt, and the fight with Romeo. He pleaded that the Montagues had not been in the wrong, and that Tybalt was the aggressor, but the angry Prince waved his words aside, and pronounced upon Romeo the sentence of perpetual banishment, on pain of death if he returned to Verona.

"Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill," said the Prince as he turned away from Benvolio.

Thus, suddenly from a sky which seemed to be full of sunshine, the storm had burst upon these hapless lovers. The heavy news was conveyed to Juliet by her nurse, that Tybalt had been foully murdered by

Romeo, and that the slayer had been banished for ever from the city. At first Juliet's passionate loyalty to her own house made her forget the tie which bound her to the Montagues. Breaking into a fury of despair she called Romeo a serpent, a fiend angelical whose noble form concealed an inward spirit of evil, a dove-feathered raven, an honourable villain, and many other epithets. But the word "banished" made her realise how much sorrow these untoward events had brought to her own heart, and the remembrance of her husband caused the tears to rain down her cheeks. Her wild words subsided into sorrowful moans and bitter sobs, and in heartbroken despair she called upon Romeo. Her nurse tried to cheer her by saying that she would seek Romeo at the Friar's cell, whither he had, no doubt, fled for refuge. Juliet gave her a ring to give to her husband, and asked her to implore him to pay her a last visit. The nurse found Romeo in the cell; he was prostrate upon the ground, weeping bitter tears and calling upon his wife. In vain the Friar had tried to console him. Even the nurse could not, for some time, make him understand that she was the bearer of a message.

"I come from Juliet," she cried, shaking him by the shoulder.

Romeo aroused himself. "Speak'st thou of Juliet? how is it with her?" he cried in frantic tones.

"O, she says nothing, sir, but weeps and weeps; and now falls on her bed; and then starts up and calls Tybalt; and then cries on Romeo, and then falls down again."

When he heard these words, Romeo drew his sword and would have slain himself, but the good Friar stayed

his hand. The message from his wife brought some measure of comfort, and he promised that before he set out for Mantua, the first place of his exile, he would see Juliet at her father's house. The rope-ladder he had prepared was in the orchard, and he knew that in the darkness of the night he could climb to the balcony where he had first heard her avowals of love. When night came Romeo stole quietly through the shady walks, a nightingale was singing in an old pomegranate tree, and the beautiful garden lay in the silence of a profound peace. Soon he stood in his dear wife's room, and clasped her in a loving embrace. How sorrowful was this first and last meeting of the husband and wife ! The hours sped quickly, and when the daylight came Romeo was forced to tear himself away. He heard the lark singing his carol to the rising sun and knew that he could no longer delay.

"Wilt thou be gone ?" said Juliet, as she clung to him, "it is not yet near day. It was the nightingale, and not the lark that pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear. Nightly she sits on yon pomegranate tree : believe me, love, it was the nightingale."

Laughingly her husband shook his head as he tenderly insisted :

*"It was the lark, the herald of the morn,  
No nightingale : look, love, what envious streaks  
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.  
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops :  
I must be gone and live, or stay and die."*

Juliet clung to him, and would have gone with him to his exile, but at that moment her nurse hurried in to

say that Lady Capulet was coming to her daughter. It was clear that Romeo must depart at once, for Lady Capulet in her bitter hatred of the Montagues would have given the alarm.

“O, think'st thou we shall ever meet again?” cried Juliet, as she strove to wipe away her tears.

“I doubt it not; and all these woes shall serve for sweet discourses in our time to come.”

“O God,” said Juliet, as he descended the ladder. “I have an ill-divining soul.”

She looked through the mist of her tears and saw the face of Romeo, pale, worn, and death-like :

*“ Methinks, I see thee, now thou art so low,  
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb :  
Either my eyesight fails, or thou look'st pale.”*

Romeo had almost reached the ground, and he too saw Juliet through the haze of his tears :

*“ And trust me, love, in my eye so do you ;  
Dry sorrow drinks our blood. Adieu ! adieu ! ”*

He leaped to the earth, and Juliet watched him until he disappeared within the coverts, and so these star-crossed lovers parted, never to meet in life again.

When Lady Capulet entered, she found her daughter weeping with despairing bitterness and was astonished that the death of Tybalt could have influenced Juliet so profoundly. She promised that ere long vengeance should be wreaked upon Romeo, and said that Capulet revenge would seek him out in Mantua, and there destroy him with a secret poison. And further, to cheer the desponding Juliet, she announced that Thursday next would see the Count Paris make the daughter

of Capulet his wife, in the church of St. Peter. But Juliet recoiled in horror at the news, and vowed that she would never wed any save the banished Romeo. At this moment Lord Capulet entered. He heard the story of her wild disobedience with great anger, and in ungoverned rage lost control of himself, calling Juliet many unworthy names, and vowing that if she would not walk to church on Thursday she should be dragged thither upon a hurdle ; that he would cast her into the streets to beg, or starve, or hang. He flung out of the room with the Lady Capulet, and left Juliet sobbing in deepest grief, with no one but the nurse to comfort her. She could not have had a more unworthy comforter, for the nurse was an unscrupulous old woman, and her counsels were always of a selfish type. Now she counselled Juliet to think of Romeo as one who was dead, and passed away from the concerns of her life, and to embrace the opportunity of becoming the wife of the rich young kinsman of the reigning Prince of Verona. Though her nature rose up in rebellious scorn against such infamy, Juliet was wise enough to see that she must disarm any suspicion on the part of her nurse. She gave her to understand, therefore, that she was inclined to follow her advice, although she felt that before anything was decided the counsel of Friar Laurence should be taken. To the Friar's cell she hastened, meeting there the Count Paris, who was making the final arrangements for the marriage ceremony on Thursday. She greeted him with all grace and Veronese courtesy, but was glad when she was left alone with the Friar. She said that she would rather die than be false to Romeo, and that if she were prevented making her escape to Mantua, she would

plunge a dagger into her heart. She said, further, that she would do anything the Friar suggested in order to be saved this hateful, sinful marriage with Paris. With the best of intentions the Friar outlined a plan which seemed to promise success :

*“Go home, be merry, give consent,  
To marry Paris. Wednesday is to-morrow ;  
To-morrow night look that thou lie alone,  
Let not thy nurse lie with thee in thy chamber :  
Take thou this vial, being then in bed,  
And this distilled liquor drink thou off ;  
When, presently, through all thy veins shall run  
A cold and drowsy humour ; for no pulse  
Shall keep his native progress, but surcease :  
No warmth, no breath, shall testify thou livest ;  
The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade  
To pale ashes ; thy eyes’ windows fall,  
Like death, when he shuts up the day of life ;  
Each part, depriv’d of supple government,  
Shall, stiff and stark and cold, appear like death :  
And in this borrow’d likeness of shrunk death  
Thou shalt continue two and forty hours,  
And then awake as from a pleasant sleep.  
Now, when the bridegroom in the morning comes  
To rouse thee from thy bed, there art thou dead :  
Then, as the manner of our country is,  
In thy best robes uncover’d on the bier,  
Thou shalt be borne to that same ancient vault,  
Where all the kindred of the Capulets lie.  
In the meantime, against thou shalt awake,  
Shall Romeo by my letters know our drift ;  
And hither shall he come, and he and I*

*Will watch thy waking, and that very night  
Shall Romeo bear thee hence to Mantua.  
And this shall free thee from this present shame,  
If no unconstant toy, nor womanish fear,  
Abate thy valour in the acting it."*

It was a plausible but a dangerous scheme, for many things in it might miscarry, and these the clever Juliet did not fail to notice. She might awaken too early, and find herself in the awful company of the dead when all around was dark and silent. The powerful potion might be too powerful and make the seeming death a real one. But Juliet quieted all her fears, and when the Wednesday evening came, she drank the potion as she lay in bed. Slowly the sleeping-draught stole all the roses from her cheeks and closed her eyes. Her joints grew stiff, and Death lay on her, like an untimely frost upon the sweetest flower of all the field. The night hours passed and darkness gave place to light, the morning birds sang in the sunlight, the streets began to put on their wonted stir and merry tumult. Sweet music sounded in the garden, for the Count Paris had arranged that Juliet should be awakened by gentle sounds on this her wedding morning, and the nurse came in, with many happy jests, to draw the curtains from the windows. She saw her young mistress lying dressed upon the bed, but something in her face made the nurse start back in terror. She touched her face, her hands, she bent her ear to catch the sound of breathing, and then a scream of affright startled the house: "Help! help! my lady's dead!" The Lord and Lady Capulet, Friar Laurence, the Count Paris and others hurried to the room, and saw

the woeful sight. The poor parents forgot all their ambitions at the sight of the dead, and Lord Capulet broke into many bitter lamentations.

"Despis'd, distressed, hated, martyr'd, kill'd," he cried in awful woe. "O child! O child!—my soul, and not my child! dead art thou!—alack! my child is dead, and with my child my joys are buried."

The Friar in solemn tones said :

*"Heaven and yourself*

*Had part in this fair maid ; now Heaven hath all,  
And all the better is it for the maid :*

*Your part in her you could not keep from death,  
But Heaven keeps his part in eternal life.*

*The most you sought was her promotion,  
For 'twas your heaven, she should be advanc'd ;*

*And weep ye now, seeing she is advanc'd*

*Above the clouds, as high as heaven itself ?*

*O ! in this love, you love your child so ill,*

*That you run mad, seeing that she is well."*

It was a solemn procession which wended its way to the great monumental tomb of the Capulets, to the place where the body of the ill-fated Lady Juliet was to be laid to rest among her ancestors. The tomb was fenced in with a railing of beautiful ironwork, and was a magnificent example of the skill of the great Veronese sarcophagus builders. Some steps led down to the entrance, and a strong door secured the vault. The dead lay upon the biers ; the latest of the Capulets, Tybalt, side by side with men of his distinguished family who had lived and died many centuries before. And there in the hollow kingdom of the dead, they laid the living Juliet to rest.

Friar Laurence had written letters to Mantua, explaining to Romeo everything that had happened, but ill news always travels more swiftly than good, and so it proved in this case, for Balthasar, the faithful servant of Romeo, had no sooner heard the news of Juliet's death, and saw her laid in Capel's monument, than he sprang upon a horse and galloped at full speed along the great high road to Mantua. There he found his master looking bright and cheerful. Romeo's heart was light, for he had had a dream which filled him with joy :

*" I dreamt, my lady came and found me dead ;  
 (Strange dream, that gives a dead man leave to think !)  
 And breath'd such life with kisses in my lips,  
 That I reviv'd, and was an emperor.  
 Ah me ! how sweet is love itself possess'd,  
 When but love's shadows are so rich in joy ! "*

With smiling face he watched the horseman speeding towards him, and greeted him with a cheery salutation when he recognised Balthasar, his servant :

*" News from Verona ! How doth my Lady Juliet ?  
 For nothing can be ill if she be well."*

He saw something in his servant's face which checked his speech. Words would not come quickly, but at last Balthasar said, in broken accents :

*" Then she is well, and nothing can be ill.  
 Her body sleeps in Capel's monument,  
 And her immortal part with angels lives,  
 I saw her laid low in her kindred's vault,  
 And presently took post to tell it you,  
 O, pardon me for bringing these ill news,  
 Since you did leave it for my office, sir."*

Romeo turned pale to the lips and staggered back.

"Hast thou no letters from the Friar?" he inquired, with hoarse, strained voice.

"No, my good lord."

"Then get thee horses. I'll be with thee straight."

Now nothing could keep him from Verona, no threat of instant death nor fear of the wrath of his Prince. He had but one thought, to reach the side of Juliet, and see her for the last time. When he had come first to Mantua he had noticed a dusty, neglected-looking shop, wherein dwelt a lean and hungry apothecary, whose task as Romeo passed him was the distilling of some liquid from certain dried herbs. "If any man needed a poison," thought Romeo, "that is the man who would sell it, even though it brought death to many." Before he joined Balthasar he called at the shop and purchased from the chemist a poison so deadly that death would follow on the instant after it was taken. With this in his girdle, he sprang upon his horse, and at nightfall stood within the burial-ground where Juliet lay.

But what had happened to the messenger of Friar Laurence; for one had been sent off? He was a brother of the Order, and happening to call at a house to see a dying man, the officers had declared that the disease which was killing the man was a virulent pestilence. The doors were sealed up, and thus the Friar was detained for many hours.

When he told this at nightfall to Friar Laurence, the good priest instantly saw that he must act without Romeo, for in less than three hours Juliet would awake from her slumber, and the Friar shuddered to think of what would happen if the lady awaked to find herself

surrounded with the dead. He also hurried, therefore, to the burial-place.

Now the Count Paris had cherished a deep love in his heart for Juliet, and had vowed to nightly visit her tomb, in order to strew flowers upon her body. Thus he was at the tomb before Romeo or the Friar reached it. He had bidden his page keep watch, and to whistle if sound of approaching footsteps should be heard, and while engaged in his sad offices he heard the warning signal and withdrew into a recess without the tomb.

The new-comers were Balthasar and his master.

"Give me the mattock and the wrenching iron," Paris heard Romeo say ; "and deliver this letter to my lord and father, early in the morning."

Balthasar turned reluctantly away, resolved to watch from a safe distance, and Romeo sprang down the steps and wrenched open the door.

Paris knew then that he was a Montague, and thought that he had come to do some shame to the dead Capulets.

"Stop thy unhallowed toil, vile Montague," he cried. "Can vengeance be pursued further than death ? Condemned villain, I do apprehend thee : Obey, and go with me ; for thou must die."

He had recognised the banished Romeo, and assumed that he had come to heap some new insult upon the body of the slain Tybalt. Romeo was a desperate, despairing man. He did not wish to bring further reproaches upon his head by the slaying of another Capulet, so he besought the youth, whom he had not recognised, to leave him to the work he had come to do. "Stay not, be gone," he said ; "live and hereafter say : 'A madman's mercy bade thee run away !'"

But Paris refused and drew his sword, crying out that he would apprehend him for a felon. They fought savagely, their swords glinting in the flickering torch-light. The affrighted page ran off to call the watch. Paris was slain, but before he died he implored Romeo to lay his body beside that of Juliet. Holding the torch to the dead face Romeo recognised him, and remembered that he had been told that Paris was to have married Juliet. He dragged the body into the vault, and then forgot everything in the sight of his beloved wife, who lay upon the funeral bier. How fair and beautiful she looked, a very Queen of Love enthroned in the sad chamber of death. With a broken-hearted cry he buried his face in the long hair which hung like a curtain about her head.

How marvellously the Fates had fought against these star-crossed lovers! Balthasar, inspired by duty to his master, had hurried to tell him the story of her death; a strange chance had prevented the delivery of the Friar's message; and Romeo, spurred by his great love, had swept aside all obstacles in order to reach her side as quickly as possible, and thus duty and affection had brought the despairing husband to the vault but one half-hour before the effects of the opiate would have passed away, and Juliet be restored once more to health and life. But Romeo did not know, his hand closed round the phial which held the deadly poison purchased from the apothecary, and he resolved to die with Juliet. He knelt beside her and took her cold hand in his, and with heart-broken sobs and bitter tears poured out his sorrowful lament.

*"O my love! my wife!*

*Death, that hath suck'd the honey of thy life,*

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*"O my love! my wife!*

*Death, that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath*

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Again and again she kissed him with passionate fervour. The noise outside increased, men were entering the vault. Her eye lighted upon Romeo's dagger. In a moment she snatched it up and buried it in her bosom.

"O happy dagger!" she said. "This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die."

As she fell back the guards dashed up to the bier, and even while they gazed upon her in astonishment, her spirit passed away.

The officer of the watch despatched some of his men to search the vicinity, and to bear the heavy tidings to the bereaved families and to the Prince, and soon Balthasar was brought in and recognised, and quickly on his heels came the Friar, trembling and weeping. He had been arrested near the churchyard gate with the mattock and spade in his hands.

The city was now alarmed by citizens rushing through the streets crying, "Juliet—Romeo—Paris," and making for the well-known tomb of the Capulets. In the midst of the clamour came Prince Escalus, accompanied by the Lord and Lady Capulet and Lord Montague. The tragic mystery of the event amazed them; they could not understand how it was that the Lady Juliet had just died from the stroke of a dagger, when they had laid her in the vault as a dead woman not many hours before. The truth, however, was revealed to them by Friar Laurence, who told the story of the passionate love for each other which possessed the son and daughter of the factious houses; how he had married them secretly; and of his device to enable Juliet to evade the shame of a marriage with Count Paris. He spoke of her despair, and how willingly she had taken the sleeping potion from

him, and how Friar John, his messenger to Romeo, had been prevented from delivering his letter.

Then Balthasar told the story of his hurried flight to Mantua, and how Romeo had determined to see his dead wife for the last time, and had threatened him with death if he did not depart and leave him alone in the vault. And the page told how the Count Paris had come, in sorrow, to strew flowers at the tomb, and had there encountered Romeo, and met his death in trying to apprehend him as a felon.

Gradually the whole of the sad story was revealed and it was seen how the enmity of Montague and Capulet had brought about the sorrow and tragedy. Prince Escalus turned to the weeping lords, and said :

“ *Capulet ! Montague !*

*See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate,*

*That Heaven finds means to kill your joys with love ;*

*And I, for winking at your discords too,*

*Have lost a brace of kinsmen :—all are punish'd.”*

The old enemies felt the rebuke, but it was not needed, for the still forms of their lost children spoke more eloquently than human tongue could do. As the bereaved parents gazed upon the pitiful spectacle through a mist of hot tears, the love of Romeo and Juliet called to them from the abyss of Death, and thus united in a common overmastering grief their hands met with a pressure that spoke of perfect reconciliation.

Then Lord Montague said that he would raise a statue of pure gold to the true and faithful Juliet, and Lord Capulet said that he would do the like in memory of Romeo, in order that Verona should know how false

fulness and love had been triumphant in their lives and death.

The sun did not shine in Verona on that sad day ; the bright Italian sky was overcast as though it mourned the untimely fate of the lovers. And the citizens wore a look of gloom, for in spite of the joy which the reconciliation of the factions brought, it was realised that the tragedy was one of deepest sorrow, and all felt the truth of the words of Prince Escalus as he turned away from the sad scene :

*“ A glooming peace this morning with it brings ;  
The sun for sorrow will not show his head.  
Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things ;  
Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished :  
For never was a story of more woe,  
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.”*

# The Tempest

**I**N days long gone by there dwelt, in the city of Milan, two brothers of highest rank, named Prospero and Antonio. The first was the reigning Duke of Milan, a man of high thought and noble purpose, but unfitted, to some extent, for the responsibilities of government, by reason of his studious disposition and love of books. Day after day he retired to his study and seemed to forget the busy world of affairs in his eagerness to learn the secrets of a world which was unseen. Most men are able to combine a love of study with the practical things of life, and find that by the wise counsel of their books they are prepared for the hard struggles of a profession or business. Prospero, however, gave himself so entirely to his studies of secret things that his estates and government could not but suffer. Recognising this, and having every confidence in his brother, he allowed him to become the ruling, if not the reigning, Duke of Milan; and Antonio who was an ambitious man, soon began to intrigue against the too-confiding Prospero.

Duke Prospero had one daughter, a happy, light-hearted child, who made the palace ring with merry laughter, and brought a gleam of sunshine into the lonely scholar's life. She loved her father with all the strength

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of her young heart, and in this she was not alone, for, in spite of his seclusion, the people of Milan were proud of their Duke, and loved him. Antonio, his wicked brother, was therefore obliged to be very secret in his designs.

Antonio was not the only enemy of the mild Duke. The King of Naples had also long sought opportunity to work the studious Prospero an injury. He had followed with scornful wonder the career of one who thought his library to be better than a dukedom, and determined some day to strike a blow which would sweep the scholar from the place of power. He rejoiced, therefore, when Antonio sought his counsel, and between the two a wicked plot was hatched.

To one Gonzalo, a nobleman, was entrusted the carrying out of part of the conspiracy. A rotten, broken old vessel, without mast, sail, or tackling, was taken quietly out to sea and anchored. It was intended that neither food nor water should be in it, but Gonzalo, who was a good man, secretly placed an ample store of rich garments, linens, stuffs, and necessities aboard, and in addition, a great number of valuable books. All this store was carefully concealed, so that, to the casual glance, the vessel seemed nothing but a derelict hull.

When all was ready the sentinels at the palace of Milan were overpowered one dark night by a number of men who rushed in upon them. The city gates had been unlocked by the traitor Antonio, and the Neapolitan soldiers swept in and made straight for the palace of Prospero. They burst in upon him and made him prisoner, snatching up at the same time the crying child, and hurrying both through the dark city, until they reached the harbour and embarked upon a sloop, which took them out to sea, to that place where the rotten old

vessel was lying at anchor. Prospero and his child were hurried on board the derelict, the anchor was cut away, and soon a swift current and rising wind swept the vessel far out to sea. All night they tossed upon the rough waves, which soon were agitated with the beating of a furious storm. The wind shrieked around the castaways, and the heavy spray came dashing over the deck of their frail bark.

Prospero was in despair and his tears fell upon the upturned face of the little maiden, who smiled her sunny, cheery smile at him as he bent over her. Her childish confidence gave him renewed courage, and calling all his powers to his aid he continued steadfastly through the long dark night. At last the dreary time of gloom came to an end, and the sun rose in a sky of cloudless blue. The wind fell, but the waves were still rough.

Prospero kept an anxious watch, until upon the horizon he discerned a dark cloud just rising out of the sea. Slowly they drifted nearer and at length he could make out what promised to be a beautiful island. As they drew yet nearer he saw the white waves curling upon the sandy beach, and soon the sea lifted them gently and cast the old vessel into a quiet little harbour, hollowed out of the rocks by the ceaseless beating of the waves during many ages.

In the city of Milan people soon grew tired of speculating upon the cause of their Duke's mysterious disappearance. The plot had been carried out so secretly that suspicion did not light upon Antonio, and it seemed quite natural that he should succeed to his brother's vacant dignities. But often in the silence of the night Antonio thought he heard strange cries coming from the

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sea, and in his dreams saw a man and his little daughter tossed to and fro in an angry sea, swept to their death among the wild, rough waves.

But Prospero and Miranda were living a quiet life on their beautiful island and learning lessons which were more precious to them than all the wealth and honours of Milan. It was a beautiful and an enchanted island, placed like a sparkling jewel in the setting of the blue, sunlit sea. Great rocks formed a bulwark around it, but within the cliffs there were lovely little bays, where the yellow sands formed a golden sickle, and upon them sea-nymphs danced and sung. Here and there were sheltered harbours with deep clear waters; and fresh streamlets, winding through green woods, leaped and splashed into the sea. There were groves of noble trees, great upright pines and massy oaks, and in some places woods of limes and fruit trees. The grass was thick, and green as emerald, and flowers of every kind and hue bedecked the meadows. Bright-winged birds flashed through the clear air, and all day long the drowsy hum of bees was heard. Farther from the shore and stretching inland were wide spaces of rough land, where sharp-spined gorse grew and dark pools and fens lay concealed. Here all was desert and uninhabitable, and through its close coverts bears and wolves crept in search of prey, and wild dogs ran in great packs. Sometimes the air was filled with the sound of wonderful music, and the wind bore on its wings delightful harmonies of fairy song, and again strange noises were heard and moaning cries.

One day Prospero heard loud cries proceeding from a cloven pine, and there, fast imprisoned, he discerned with eyes which secret studies had enlightened, a quaint

lairy figure penned within the prison. For more than twelve years the sprite had been held fast, and every night his frantic cries and groans had made the wild beasts howl in their dens. Prospero by his art soon released him, and Ariel, for that was his name, became his devoted servant.

There was a large dry cave not far from a wood of fragrant lime-trees, and here Prospero made his home. The necessities and rich stuffs placed in the rotten ship by the kind-hearted Gonzalo made the cave a pleasant dwelling-place, and far within its depths Prospero stored his books. Twelve quiet, happy years passed and Miranda grew into lovely womanhood, knowing no man save her father, and being taught by Nature and himself all gracious arts and useful knowledge.

Prospero had another servant, a strange monster who bore the name of Caliban. His father was an earth-demon, and his mother a horrid witch called Sycorax. Caliban was a deformed and ugly thing, half man and half beast, wicked in his thoughts and cruel in his disposition. When Prospero discovered him he could not speak, and only learned to express his wishes after many lessons. But curses came easier to his tongue than gentler words, and he did his work with growls of hate and despair. And yet beauty appealed to him and music charmed him out of himself for a time. In his sleep visions of better things sometimes came, and then his speech took on a nobler form and seemed to promise a higher life. He said on one occasion :

*" Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears ; and sometimes voices  
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,*

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*Will make me sleep again : and then, in dreaming,  
The clouds methought would open, and show riches  
Ready to drop upon me ; that, when I waked,  
I cried to dream again."*

And so this strange, evil monster, half man and half demon, was not altogether bad, for if in dreams we see and love the higher things there is hope that one day we shall rise to nobler aims. Caliban hated his master and feared him because of his power. But he feared his master's books even more profoundly, for in them he saw the secret of the strength of Prospero. "Without them," he said, "he's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not one spirit to command." In this he was more acute than Antonio, the traitor Duke, for this man thought to make Prospero poor by depriving him of his title and dukedom, but the half-man Caliban knew that the surest way was to burn his books. And the poor monster was wiser than he knew.

One day, from the busy port of Naples a noble ship was putting forth upon a voyage of pleasure. She was a King's ship, part of a great fleet, and in her a goodly company had gathered. King Alonso of Naples, Prince Sebastian his brother, Antonio Duke of Milan, Gonzalo the old counsellor, and Prince Ferdinand, son of the King of Naples, were all embarked, and crowds of loyal Neapolitans greeted the ship with farewell cries as she slipped quietly from the wharf and spread her sails to the breeze. Across the spacious, beautiful bay she glided and soon the great fire mountain faded into the shadows behind her and night found her far on the tossing seas. Her progress was watched by other eyes than those of the cheering Neapolitans. By his magic

art, Prospero while sitting in his quiet cave on the island could trace her progress, and as she neared his coasts he commanded a great storm to arise. Swiftly it burst out of the dark clouds, the winds roared and the waves rose in tempestuous fury, and soon the vessel was rushing through the darkness upon an unknown coast. The sailors sprang to their posts and tried to take down the sails. Crack—crack! a mast went by the board, and the tackling lay about the deck. The master rushed from below and the boatswain rallied the men.

“Heigh, my hearts! cheerly, cheerly, my hearts! yare, yare! Take in the topsail.”

His voice could hardly be heard in the din of the tempest. The Duke of Milan, the Prince, and Gonzalo hurriedly left their cabins, but were brushed aside by the sailors as they laboured to relieve the staggering vessel of her sail. Rank and dignity were alike forgotten in the confusion.

“Remember whom thou hast aboard,” cried out Gonzalo, as the rough boatswain pushed him aside; “be patient.”

“When the sea is,” was the reply. “Hence! What care these roarers for the name of king? You are a counsellor; if you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more; use your authority; if you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap. Cheerly, good hearts! Out of our way, I say.”

There was a cry and the topmast was seen to be giving way. The sailors rushed to lower it, and afterwards tried to haul the mainsail round so as to keep the vessel off the shore. Their efforts were of no avail.

## 270 Stories from Shakespeare

Resistlessly the ship was being driven upon the rocks, and presently a wild cry arose :

“ All lost ! to prayers, to prayers ! all lost.”

The shore was seen looming through the storm-wracks. Huge columns of spray were being thrown up as the waves were hurled against the cliffs.

Suddenly strange lights began to flit about the ship, terrifying the mariners and making their hair stand up in fright. On the topmast, the yards, the bowsprit, they could be seen blazing in the darkness ; now in the waist of the ship, along the deck and even down the cabins. Swifter than lightning but more alarming the fire ran, and soon a cry arose that evil demons were making their foul play upon the ship. The noblemen began to be afraid, for it seemed to them that they were being singled out for torment. Prince Ferdinand, the King's son, with hair standing on end ran to and fro, the flame seeming to force him overboard. A great shout arose, amid the rending of timbers, “ We split, we split,” and the Prince, giving a cry of terror, was seen to leap overboard into the tumbling billows. He was followed by his comrades, only the mariners remaining in the ship.

And now a stranger thing happened. The vessel was caught up by a gigantic wave and hurled into a deep cleft in the rocks where deep water ran and formed a secluded harbour. She sailed on until quite hidden from the storm, and then a heavy sleep fell upon the tired sailors, and, safely stowed under hatches, they lost all thought of the troubles and dangers of the sea.

Afar off, the scattered royal fleet slowly gathered together again and returned with sadness to Naples, reporting that they had seen the King's ship wrecked and his great person perish.

But by a wondrous chance not one had perished, for they were somehow wafted to the shore and all unknown to each other had landed on different parts of the island where the injured Prospero reigned as King. Thus his enemies were all delivered into his hands, the treacherous brother who usurped his dominions, the King of Naples who had plotted his overthrow, and the well-loved Prince Ferdinand, son of Alonso, and there had been opened to Prospero a broad highway for vengeance. Quiet study on the island had enriched his knowledge of the magical arts and by their means he knew how to break his enemies like twigs. The island was under his undivided sway, and at a word spirits like Ariel and monsters like Caliban would be swift to obey his command. Never had an injured man a finer opportunity for a complete revenge. And Prospero prepared to take it.

His daughter had watched the storm rise and had seen the ship plunging through the angry waves. With anxious, beating heart she heard the wild, piteous cries for help, and saw the affrighted men leap from the deck into the sea. Calling to her father she said :

“ O, I have suffer'd,  
 With those that I saw suffer ! a brave vessel,  
 Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her,  
 Dash'd all to pieces. O, the cry did knock  
 Against my very heart ! Poor souls, they perish'd !  
 Had I been any god of power, I would  
 Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere  
 It should the good ship so have swallow'd and  
 The fraughting souls within her.”

Miranda had then seen the vessel disappear and thought

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the air, dainty, graceful, ethereal, tricky sometimes, especially when the spirits associated with him tormented Caliban by taking ape-like forms, mowing and chattering at him, or like hedgehogs, tumbling in his way as he went barefoot along the path, or again like adders with cloven tongues hissing him into madness. But Ariel was a delicate spirit and delighted in music. His songs made the groves sweet with gentle harmony, and his dances, when the soft moonlight touched the sleeping waters and made the sands a golden platform, filled the night with glancing fairy movements. His wings were the gentle zephyrs which kissed the blossoms and the flowers, and wherever there was sweetness, light, and beauty, there Ariel loved to be. His music crept through the still air and quieted restless spirits. As a water-nymph he now swept through the air and came to the place where Ferdinand sat in solitary musing over the sad fate of his father and friends. Suddenly the place was filled with the strains of delicate and delightful music, and the Prince heard these words :

*“ Come unto these yellow sands,  
And then take hands :  
Court’sied when you have and kiss’d  
The wild waves whist :  
Foot it feally here and there :  
And, sweet sprites, the burthen bear  
Hark, hark ! ”*

Ferdinand leaped to his feet, and looked around to find the hidden singer ; not discerning him, he thought that by following the sound he would surely be able to discover him.

that it had been dashed to pieces on the rocks. But everything had been ordered by the magic of Prospero under the active service of the sprite Ariel, and he now comforted his daughter by saying :

*“ Wipe thou thine eyes ; have comfort.  
The direful spectacle of the wreck, which touch'd  
The very virtue of compassion in thee,  
I have with such provision in mine art  
So safely ordered, that there is no soul,  
No, not so much perdition as an hair  
Betid to any creature in the vessel  
Which thou heard'st cry, which thou saw'st sink.”*

And then he told her the story of their days of power in Milan, how they had been injured, and how by good fortune their enemies were now delivered into his hands. Moreover he showed her a reason for instantly taking advantage of the plight of his enemies :

*“ I find my zenith doth depend upon  
A most auspicious star, whose influence  
If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes  
Will for ever droop.”*

He had the power of bringing sleep to persons when he chose and now, at his will, Miranda fell into a deep, untroubled slumber, and Ariel came to greet his master with the tidings that all his commands had been obeyed to the letter. He craved his liberty, but Prospero commanded him to assume the form of a sea-nymph, invisible to all save the magician himself, and promised that in two days the fairy should have his freedom. There was much for him to do before Prospero could give him the liberty he desired. He was a sprite of

the air, dainty, graceful, ethereal, tricky sometimes, especially when the spirits associated with him tormented Caliban by taking ape-like forms, mowing and chattering at him, or like hedgehogs, tumbling in his way as he went barefoot along the path, or again like adders with cloven tongues hissing him into madness. But Ariel was a delicate spirit and delighted in music. His songs made the groves sweet with gentle harmony, and his dances, when the soft moonlight touched the sleeping waters and made the sands a golden platform, filled the night with glancing fairy movements. His wings were the gentle zephyrs which kissed the blossoms and the flowers, and wherever there was sweetness, light, and beauty, there Ariel loved to be. His music crept through the still air and quieted restless spirits. As a water-nymph he now swept through the air and came to the place where Ferdinand sat in solitary musing over the sad fate of his father and friends. Suddenly the place was filled with the strains of delicate and delightful music, and the Prince heard these words :

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*"Where should this music be? i' th' air or th' earth?  
 It sounds no more: and, sure, it waits upon  
 Some god o' th' island. Sitting on a bank,  
 Weeping again the king my father's wreck,  
 This music crept by me upon the waters,  
 Allaying both their fury and my passion  
 With its sweet air: thence I have follow'd it,  
 Or it hath drawn me rather. But 'tis gone.  
 No, it begins again."*

Ariel had been drawing the Prince towards the cave where Prospero and Miranda dwelt, and as he drew near they looked upon him with great eagerness. He was a handsome prince and Miranda thought that he was a god. The music began again and Ariel sang:

*"Full fathom five thy father lies;  
 Of his bones are coral made;  
 Those are pearls that were his eyes:  
 Nothing of him that doth fade,  
 But doth suffer a sea-change  
 Into something rich and strange.  
 Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell.  
 Ding-dong.*

*Hark! now I hear them,—ding-dong, bell."*

And now Ferdinand stood before Miranda, and if she thought him a thing divine, too noble to be of this earth, he felt sure that she was the goddess of the island on whom the wondrous music attended as a kind of fairy nymph. Prospero saw that they were bound up in each other at the very first glance and in his heart he was glad, but he pretended to be angry with the Prince, calling him usurper and spy and traitor, and threatening to manacle him feet and neck to-

gether, to give him nothing but sea-water to drink, and to feed him with fresh-brook muscles, wither'd roots, and acorn husks. Ferdinand drew his sword, and would have struck Prospero, but on the instant he was charmed by his magic and made helpless. He could not move until Prospero removed the charm, and then he followed Miranda cheerfully, even though her unwilling steps led him to a prison. He forgot everything in the new joy which flooded his heart with sunshine, the loss of his father, the wreck of his friends, the threats of Prospero, for as he said :

*“ My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up,  
My father’s loss, the weakness which I feel,  
The wreck of all my friends, nor this man’s threats,  
To whom I am subdued, are but light to me,  
Might I but through my prison once a day  
Behold this maid : all corners else o’ th’ earth  
Let liberty make use of ; space enough  
Have I in such a prison.”*

His prison was near the cell of Prospero, and to try his patience a heavy task was set. He was told to remove some thousands of logs from one place and pile them up in another, it was a burdensome, futile task, and one likely to try the patience of a high-spirited youth, if it had not been lightened by the smile and presence of Miranda. Her father watched her when she did not think he was near, and smiled to hear her say to Ferdinand that she would bear the heavy logs while he rested. Sunset was a long way off, and only part of his day’s task was done, but Ferdinand scouted, as dishonourable, such laziness on his part, and vowed that he would rather crack his sinews and break his back than suffer Miranda

to bear a single log. Miranda had never seen any man but her father, and had never beheld a woman's face, save in her own looking-glass. She had no dower but her modesty and her thoughts passed swiftly into words. "I would not wish any companion in the world to you," she said in reply to an impassioned speech of the Prince. "Nor can imagination form a shape, besides yourself, to like of." Her words were sweet and gracious and Ferdinand felt his heart leap for joy. He avowed that, on the very instant he had seen Miranda that his heart did fly to her service and that he endured hard servitude patiently for her sake.

Miranda felt the tears filling her eyes, as a wondrous gratitude filled her soul, and then with trembling lips she said, "Do you love me?" It was a question which is not usually addressed by a woman to the man she loves, but Ferdinand did not misunderstand the pure nature which thus expressed itself in glowing words. There was no self-consciousness in the unsullied soul which now felt for the first time the mastery of love, and all she had she laid at the feet of her beloved. Ferdinand could not reach the great altitudes of this maidenly love, for he acknowledged that he full many a time had eyed fair ladies with best regard and been brought into bondage by the sweet harmony of alluring tongues, but, he said, he had never met a lady so perfect and so peerless, and called upon heaven and earth to witness that above all else in the world he loved, honoured, and prized Miranda. Prospero, still standing by unseen, heard the twain promise to be husband and wife and he rejoiced greatly that his daughter had thus found the crowning joy of a perfect love.

On another part of the island the King of Naples,

Prince Sebastian, and the Duke of Milan with Gonzalo and others had found themselves in safety after the perils of the stormy waves. Gonzalo said to the King :

*“ Beseech you, sir, be merry ; you have cause,  
So have we all, of joy ; for our escape  
Is much beyond our loss. Our hint of woe  
Is common ; every day, some sailor’s wife,  
The masters of some merchant, and the merchant,  
Have just our theme of woe ; but for the miracle,  
I mean our preservation, few in millions  
Can speak like us : then wisely, good sir, weigh  
Our sorrow with our comfort.”*

The old counsellor was apt to preach and to moralise. His words were true, although his hearers were inclined to laugh at them. King Alonso was mourning because of the loss of Ferdinand, his son and heir, whom he felt certain had been swept away and drowned. Francisco, one of his lords, believed that the Prince still lived :

*“ Sir, he may live :  
I saw him beat the surges under him,  
And ride upon their backs ; he trod the water,  
Whose enmity he flung aside, and breasted  
The surge most swollen that met him ; his bold head  
'Bove the contentious waves he kept, and oar'd  
Himself with his good arms in lusty stroke  
To the shore, that o'er his wave-worn basis bow'd,  
As stooping to relieve him : I not doubt  
He came alive to land.”*

Still the King was unconvinced, and Sebastian, his rother, heard the words of Francisco with a sullen

frown. By this death he saw his own way to the crown, albeit Ferdinand had a sister married to the King of Tunis, whose right it was to inherit if Ferdinand was dead ; and already the Duke Antonio and Sebastian had plotted to seize the Kingdom of Naples.

As the King and his companions talked together a strange drowsiness fell upon the party, and soon all save Sebastian and Antonio sunk into slumber. There was a restlessness in the souls of the two men that drove sleep from their eyelids ; and while the King slept Antonio poured the poison of his traitorous advice into the willing ear of Sebastian, and the treacherous plotters drew their swords in order to slay the King and Gonzalo. But as they raised their weapons for the stroke Ariel sang a warning into the ear of Gonzalo :

*“ While you here do snoring lie,  
Open-eyed conspiracy  
His time doth take.  
If of life you keep a care,  
Shake off slumber, and beware :  
Awake, awake ! ”*

The counsellor sprang to his feet and aroused the King. They saw Sebastian and Antonio standing white-faced with drawn swords in their hands. In answer to the King's inquiry the traitors said that as they stood on guard they had heard a bellowing like bulls or lions, a din like the rumble of an earthquake. All unsuspecting Gonzalo bade them lead on to search further for the Prince, and the traitors resolved to defer their attempt until the King was worn out with travel and so wearied that his vigilance would fail. At length in a lovely forest glade they heard sweet music, and

presently many strange shapes appeared with dainty viands, which they set before the hungry wayfarers to the accompaniment of a kind of fairy dance. Prospero, invisible to the sight of the King and his followers, watched from above. The fairies vanished and the hungry Alonso, overruling the scruples of his doubting followers, gave the signal to begin the feast. As he did so, Ariel appeared like a harpy and clapped his wings upon the table, there was a blinding flash of lightning, a growl of thunder, and in an instant the banquet vanished. And then the harpy spoke and told the King that he and his followers were unfit to live. Alonso drew his sword, but Ariel continued :

“ Remember,—

*For that's my business to you,—that you three  
From Milan did supplant good Prospero ;  
Exposed unto the sea, which hath requit it,  
Him and his innocent child : for which foul deed  
The powers, delaying, not forgetting, have  
Incensed the seas and shores, yea, all the creatures,  
Against your peace. Thee of thy son, Alonso,  
They have bereft ; and do pronounce by me,  
Lingering perdition—worse than any death  
Can be at once—shall step by step attend  
You and your ways ; whose wraths to guard you from,—  
Which here, in this most desolate isle, else falls  
Upon your heads,—is nothing but heart-sorrow  
And a clear life ensuing.”*

There was another roll of thunder ; then to the sound of soft music, the fairy shapes glided in again and with mocking dance carried away the empty table. Antonio and Sebastian heard the words of Ariel and

hardened their hearts, but the conscience of Alonso moved him to repentance. He now began to recognise the justice of the troubles which had befallen him; indeed, remembrance of the injured Duke of Milan had lain heavy upon him when the storm-winds hurled his ship upon the rocky coast. He cried out in sorrowful tones:

*"O, it is monstrous, monstrous!  
 Methought the billows spoke, and told me of it;  
 The winds did sing it to me; and the thunder,  
 That deep and dreadful organ-pipe, pronounced  
 The name of Prosper: it did bass my trespass.  
 Therefore my son i' th' ooze is bedded; and  
 I'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded,  
 And with him there lie mudded."*

His brother and the Duke of Milan also felt the sting of conscience and rushed away to hide themselves in the depths of the wood.

Meanwhile, Caliban had discovered two of the shipwrecked men, Stephano and Trinculo. They could not make out what the strange monster was and called him opprobrious names. Afterwards Stephano produced a bottle of strong spirits and the three drank until they were intoxicated. To Caliban the potent spirit seemed to bring new life. He vowed that he would serve Prospero no longer but become the devoted servant of the man who carried the bottle. He burst out into a drunken song:

*"Farewell, master; farewell, farewell!  
 No more dams I'll make for fish;  
 Nor fetch in firing  
 At requiring;*

*Nor scrape trencher, nor wash dish :*

*'Ban, 'Ban, Ca-caliban*

*Has a new masler :—get a new man.*

*Freedom, hey-day ! hey-day, freedom ! freedom,  
hey-day, freedom ! ”*

The three staggered along, and the invisible Ariel hovered about them ready to put in a mischievous word and lent an attentive ear to their discourse. His interjections led to quarrelling, for when Caliban or Stephano or Trinculo said anything, straight there came the reply, “Thou liest,” and this soon led to angry blows. Caliban proposed to his new acquaintances that they should murder Prospero, seize his daughter, and then makes themselves masters of the island. Mysterious music now tempted them forward, and soon Ariel led them into rough and devious ways, where the sharp briars and thorns pierced them, until finally they tumbled into a green-mantled foul lake, and there they floundered till they struggled to the other side. Thus they came to Prospero’s cell, treading softly that they might not waken their intended prey, whom they expected to find all unprepared. But they had reckoned without Ariel, whose tricks were not yet at an end. No sooner had the three villains crept through the doorway of the cell than their eyes lighted upon rich garments which had been purposely displayed to tempt their cupidity. Immediately the sailors forgot all else and vain were the efforts of Caliban to spur them on to do the murder first. They were equally deaf to his warnings until of a sudden their ears were startled with direful yelling, and a great pack of hounds, with fierce eyes blazing, and white teeth grinning, dashed in

upon them. Prospero and Ariel followed behind and set them on.

With shouts of dismay Caliban and the others turned tail and soon vanished into the forest, the hounds snapping at their heels and driving them frantic with terror.

Meanwhile Prospero had discovered himself to Ferdinand in a happier guise. He told the Prince that the vexations which he had imposed upon him were but trials of his character, and that seeing how nobly he had stood the test he was determined to give him the hand of his dear Miranda.

Ferdinand was overjoyed to receive so precious a gift and he vowed that he would love and cherish his sweet bride as he hoped for quiet days and a long life. Miranda was no less happy, and further to cheer the lovers Prospero called up a gracious vision. Iris, Ceres, and Juno, goddesses of growth and plenty, appeared and blessed them in beautiful marriage songs. It was a vision of entrancing beauty and the lovers watched the glittering pageant with delighted eyes.

*“Honour, riches, marriage-blessing,  
Long continuance, and increasing,  
Hourly joys be still upon you !  
Juno sings her blessings on you.”*

*“Earth’s increase, foison plenty,  
Barns and garners never empty ;  
Vines with clustering bunches growing ;  
Plants with goodly burthen bowing ;  
Spring come to you at the farthest  
In the very end of harvest !  
Scarcity and want shall shun you ;  
Ceres’ blessing so is on you.”*

Then certain reapers entered and joined in a merry dance and all was joy, until suddenly Prospero remembered the treachery meditated by Caliban. He spoke, and with a noise like that of thunder, the goddesses and reapers vanished and melted into air. Prospero seemed strangely moved, and rightly, for the baseness of the drunkards was in striking contrast to the simple, happy, and innocent scene they were looking upon. But he chased the frown from his face and turned with a smile to Ferdinand.

*" You do look, my son, in a moved sort  
As if you were dismay'd : be cheerful, sir ;  
Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and  
Are melted into air, into thin air :  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on ; and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vex'd ;  
Bear with my weakness ; my old brain is troubled :  
Be not disturb'd with my infirmity :  
If you be pleased, retire into my cell,  
And there repose : a turn or two I'll walk,  
To still my beating mind."*

With these words he turned from the young couple to confer with Ariel apart, and at his summons the sprite appeared, to recount the story of the plight of the noblemen. They were now all prisoners, not far from the

cell. King Alonso, his brother Sebastian, and Antonio, the Duke, were all three distracted with superstitious fears, while Gonzalo, the good old lord, wept many bitter tears. Prospero by his wonderful powers of magic had but to say a word and all his enemies could be swept away. He had the supreme power, their lives were now in the hollow of his hand. Vengeance was his and he could exact a bitter penalty. Ariel said their grief was so profound and sincere that were he human and not spirit his affections for them would become tender. This appeal of the sprite ended the indecision of Prospero and he replied :

*"And mine shall.*

*Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling  
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,  
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,  
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art ?  
Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,  
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury  
Do I take part : the rarer action is  
In virtue than in vengeance : they being penitent,  
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend  
Not a frown further. Go release them, Ariel :  
My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,  
And they shall be themselves."*

It was indeed a mighty forgiveness. Love had kept the heart of Prospero tender, and solitude had deepened in him the spirit of true forgiveness. He could forgive and forget, for he would not burden his remembrances with a heaviness that was past, and he rose in majesty as one whose nature was as fine gold purified by the fire. When his now penitent enemies were brought

before him he spoke to them in gentle tones, presenting himself to them, not in his magic robes, but as he had been when he was Duke of Milan, and yet he had to say stern words to Sebastian and Antonio, although he forgave them. He told the story of his coming to the island, and then caused them to see the lost Prince Ferdinand and Miranda, seated together playing at chess. Ferdinand looked up, and seeing his father, rose with a cry of delight and ran to him and knelt at his feet. Miranda also started up and gazed with astonishment at the noblemen. A cry fell from her lips :

*"O, wonder !*

*How many goodly creatures are there here !*

*How beauteous mankind is ! O brave new world,*

*That has such people in 't."*

King Alonso thought that she must be a goddess, too beautiful to be mortal, and when he learned that she was the affianced wife of his son his joy knew no bounds.

A trampling of feet outside the cell announced the coming of the sailors, who, rejoicing to find their King and Prince safe and well, told them that their gallant ship was now all taut and trim, ready to bear them across the seas to Naples. All this had been the doing of Ariel, who by his faithfulness had almost achieved the liberty he craved. Prospero invited the King to rest the night in his cell, and promised on the morrow to bring them all to the ship and so to Naples :

*"Where I have hope to see the nuptial*

*Of these our dear-beloved solemnized ;*

*And thence retire me to my Milan, where*

*Every third thought shall be my grave.*

*I'll deliver all ;*

## Stories from Shakespeare

*And promise you calm seas, auspicious gales,  
And sail so expeditious, that shall catch  
Your royal fleet far off. My Ariel, chick,  
That is thy charge : then to the elements  
Be free, and fare thou well ! ”*

All ended happily, Prospero and Antonio, with rest of the voyagers whose experiences had been wonderful, sailed away over a tranquil sea under most beautiful of summer skies, and the enchanted island sank behind them and was lost in the golden haze of the far horizon. But Ariel, the delicate and triest spirit, who loved the sunshine and the flowers and whose breath of life was music, still lives there in perfect happiness, freedom, and the lovely groves still re-echo the sweetness of his song :

*“ Where the bee sucks, there suck I :  
In a cowslip’s bell I lie ;  
There I couch when owls do cry.  
On the bat’s back I do fly  
After summer merrily.  
Merrily, merrily shall I live now  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.”*

